

Notice of Meeting



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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 5 June 2025 at 6.30 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

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<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/councilmeetingslive>

Date of despatch of Agenda: Date Not Specified

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Gordon Oliver on 01635 519486
e-mail: gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at
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WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

Agenda - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 5 June 2025 (continued)

To: Councillors Dominic Boeck (Chairman), Janine Lewis (Vice-Chairman), Martin Colston, Paul Dick, Owen Jeffery, Jane Langford, Louise Sturgess, Martha Vickers and Clive Taylor

Substitutes: Councillors Adrian Abbs, Dennis Benneyworth, Carolyn Culver, Billy Drummond, Clive Hooker, Alan Macro, David Marsh, Matt Shakespeare and Richard Somner

Agenda

Part I		Page No.
1	Apologies for Absence To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).	7 - 8
2	Minutes To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 May 2025.	9 - 10
3	Recommendations and Actions Tracker To receive an update on recommendations and actions following the previous Committee meeting.	11 - 12
4	Declarations of Interest To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct .	13 - 14
5	Petitions Purpose: To consider any petitions requiring an Officer response.	15 - 16
6	LGA Review of Children's Social Care Purpose: This report is to share the feedback, findings and recommendation from a recent LGA Peer Review in Children's Services.	17 - 58
7	Castle Gate Ofsted Report Purpose: To inform Members about the Castle Gate Short Break Service and the outcome of its most recent Ofsted inspection, conducted on 18–19 March 2025, in which the service received an 'Outstanding' rating.	59 - 72

Agenda - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 5 June 2025 (continued)

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|----|--|-----------|
| 8 | Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School
Purpose: To present the findings of the recent Ofsted and CQC thematic review of children with SEND, of compulsory school age, who are not registered pupils at a registered independent school or any type of state-funded school. | 73 - 88 |
| 9 | Delivering Better Value in SEND Closedown and the Innovation in SEND Delivery Plan
Purpose: to present the outcomes of the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme and the innovation in SEND Delivery Plan. | 89 - 130 |
| 10 | LGSCO Recommendations Report
Purpose: To share Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) recommendations of their recent investigation (LGSCO 23018177) and the action plan developed by West Berkshire Council to address the recommendations. | 131 - 136 |
| 11 | Executive Forward Plan - May to August 2025
Purpose: To advise the Committee of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council's Executive from May to August 2025 and for Members to decide whether to review any of the proposed items prior to the meeting indicated in the Plan. | 137 - 152 |
| 12 | Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme
Purpose: To receive new items and agree and prioritise the work programme of the Committee. | 153 - 154 |
| 13 | Exclusion of Press and Public
RECOMMENDATION: That members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information of the description contained in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 specified in brackets in the heading of each item.
Section 10 of Part 10 of the Constitution refers. | |

Part II

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| 14 | LGSCO Recommendations Report
<i>(Paragraph 1 - Information relating to an individual.)</i>
<i>(Paragraph 2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.)</i>

Purpose: To share Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) recommendations of their recent investigation (LGSCO 23018177) and the action plan developed by West Berkshire Council to address the recommendations. | 155 - 168 |
|----|--|-----------|

**Agenda - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 5 June
2025 (continued)**

Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Interim Executive Director - Resources

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact
Gordon Oliver on telephone (01635) 519486.

Agenda Item 1

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
5 June 2025

Item 1 – Apologies

Verbal Item

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DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 15 MAY 2025

Councillors Present: Dominic Boeck, Martin Colston, Paul Dick, Owen Jeffery, Jane Langford, Janine Lewis, Louise Sturgess, Clive Taylor, and Martha Vickers

Also Present: Sarah Clarke (Monitoring Officer and Interim Executive Director for Resources), Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive), and Darius Zarazel (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

PART I

1 Election of the Chairman

RESOLVED: That Councillor Dominic Boeck be elected as Chairman of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

2 Election of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: That Councillor Janine Lewis be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

(The meeting commenced at 9.38pm and closed at 9.40pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Recommendations and Actions Tracker

The Recommendations and Actions Tracker is a standing item, and documents the progress of formal scrutiny recommendations and suggested actions for improvement made by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its public meetings. Items will remain on the tracker until a response has been provided to the Committee by the Executive, council departments, and/or external partners.

Formal Recommendations to Executive

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Scrutiny recommendation	Lead	Target date	Last update	Response	Status

Formal Recommendations to External Partners

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Scrutiny recommendation	Lead	Target date	Last update	Response	Status

Suggested Actions for Improvement to Council Departments/Partners

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Action	Lead	Target date	Last update	Update	Status
178	21 September 2024: SEND High Needs Block & Delivering Better Value	Bring the performance dashboard as part of a future report	Neil Goddard	Jun-25	Jun-25	An update on the SEND High Needs Block and DBV programme was due to go to the Scrutiny Commission meeting on 13 March 2025, but this was deferred due to Ofsted inspections. DBV/ Closedown and the Innovation in SEND Delivery Plan is on the agenda for the meeting on 5 June 2025	Complete
180	21 September 2024: SEND High Needs Block & Delivering Better Value	DfE Regional Director to be invited to to attend the next meeting where this is discussed.	AnnMarie Dodds	N/A	Feb-25	The DfE Regional Director is responsible for the Academy Schools in West Berkshire and is not responsible for the High Needs Block or SEND spending.	Closed
214	26 November 2024: Early Intervention and Family Help	Timetable a future scrutiny review of youth services.	Rebecca Wilshire / Karen Attala	N/A	N/A	To be considered by the CYP Scrutiny Committee when determining its future work programme.	In progress
215		Timetable a future scrutiny review of wraparound care	Neil Goddard	N/A	N/A		In progress
222	11 February 2025: Actions from Previous Minutes	SEND High Needs Block report to include commentary on the effectiveness of the DBV appointments	Neil Goddard	Jun-25	Jun-25	DBV Closedown and the Innovation in SEND Delivery Plan is on the agenda for the meeting on 5 June 2025	Complete

Last updated: 21-May-25

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
5 June 2025

Item 4 – Declarations of Interest

Verbal Item

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Agenda Item 5

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
5 June 2025

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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LGA Peer Review – Children’s Safeguarding

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	5 th June 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	13 March 2025
Report Author:	Rebecca Wilshire

1 Purpose of the Report

This report is to share the feedback, findings and recommendation from a recent LGA Peer Review in Children’s Services.

2 Recommendation(s)

The recommendation is that findings are considered and where required supported so all recommendations can be fully implemented.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial	There is no financial implication in this report, the report is feeding back the findings from a recent LGA Peer Review However, some recommendations may require financial support, and this would be explored further if needed as some area will be addressed within the Transformation Funding already agreed.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications in this report
Legal:	There are no legal implications in this report
Risk Management:	There are no risk management implications in this report
Property:	There are no property implications in this report

Policy:				
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		There is no impact on equalities within this report. The report and its attachments are intended to feedback on a recent LGA Peer Review
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Environmental Impact:		X		There is no environment impact from report
Health Impact:		X		There is no health impact from this report
ICT Impact:		X		There are no ICT implications with this report
Digital Services Impact:		X		

Council Strategy Priorities:		X		This report supports Council Priorities: 1) Services we are proud of 2) Fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all
Core Business:	X			The findings of the LGA Peer Review fully support core business around safeguarding children e
Data Impact:		X		There is no data impact.
Consultation and Engagement:	LGA Peer Review engage with a variety of practitioners and partners and included engagement with families.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 West Berkshire Council requested a LGA Peer Review on their Family Safeguarding Model. The rationale for this was linked to ensuring we have the right safeguards in place and exploring any gaps there may be.
- 4.2 Many areas of children services are under regular and rigorous scrutiny, this comes in many forms of auditing, focus visit from Ofsted, inspection activity, external audit and multi-agency audit. Therefore, we consider we know ourselves well.
- 4.3 Over the last 18 months, there has been a focus on Children in Care, Care Leavers had a Focus visit from Ofsted and the Front Door always has some form of audit and reviewing activity taking place, and Children with Disability from January also had a full audit of all children in place due to concerns in this area. Therefore, the decision of focus for the LGA was linked to Safeguarding Teams.
- 4.4 Over the last 18 months there have been concerns relating to practice and relating to safeguarding and statutory duties, however, changes in leadership, building a service built on high support, high challenge and high expectations have started to take effect to improve areas of practice, support to children and support to the wellbeing of staff who work for us. We have seen several improvements being made, therefore the LGA Peer Review felt it was the right time to assess where we are at, assure ourselves we know ourselves well, and consider any further areas for development.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 Feedback Slides from LGA, see Appendix 1

5.2 Feedback Letter from LGA, see Appendix 2

5.3 Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)

- (a) Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model is being utilised to its full potential
- (b) Is there evidence of Management Oversight, Case Supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout
- (c) Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm
- (d) Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs
- (e) Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?

5.4 Draft Feedback Letter provides an overview.

6 Proposals/Recommendations

6.1 Recommendation 1: Clarify and strengthen the governance and delivery arrangements for early help with partners

- (a) Early help is a key area to be developed to ensure a positive impact on the numbers of children in need, child protection plans and the stability to deliver the family safeguarding model. Addressing the strategy, action plan, and partnership buy-in as a priority is necessary to ensure that the impact is clearly demonstrated.

6.2 Use governance structures to develop resilience; not just a one council approach, a whole West Berkshire approach.

- (a) Ensure full engagement from the integrated care board (ICB) to shared priorities, actions and possibly funding. A partnership rich, strategic SEND board could be put in place to map out joint commissioning work as well as the development of shared priorities related to health, SEND and voluntary services support. A review of Education Partnership arrangements may be prudent to explore a forum to agree joint endeavours between schools and the local authority outside of statutory and school led forums. Agreements need to be in place for complex needs with a shared commitment to partnership solutions and shared funding agreements.

6.3 Review governance and programme management arrangements:

- (a) There are a number of initiatives being taken forward at the same time, including workforce development, the embedding of the family safeguarding model and the child in need pilot (CiN). Determine which areas of work are priorities at any one

moment. Ensure that attention is given to these and outcomes achieved against defined strategic objectives, so that focus can then shift to another area.

6.4 Undertake a desktop review of children missing education.

- (a) Consider commissioning an independent and external review of existing practices and governance arrangements so you are satisfied that they are fit for purpose.

6.5 Review the SEF to fully reflect achievements, developments and future direction.

- (a) The current SEF document does not provide a full and evidenced portrait of the challenges for children and their families in West Berkshire - and how these are being addressed. There is a clear self-awareness within the service that is not fully replicated in the SEF, which should be redrafted as a priority.

- 6.6 It is recommended that this Corporate Board note the findings from the LGA Peer Review and agree for the recommendations to be taken forward.

7 Other options considered.

No other options considered at this stage

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 This report it to share with Snr Leaders the outcome of the LGA Peer Review which took place in January.
- 8.2 There are many positives within this, and it demonstrates the hard work which has taken place over the last 18 months to address practice issues, safeguarding children and build a service we can all be proud off.
- 8.3 There is still work to do, we know what this is and what we need to do to achieve it, the timescales are urgent as we are anticipating our next inspection soon.
- 8.4 This briefing aims to ensure that Senior Leaders are informed and committed to providing

9 Appendices

Appendix 1 – LGA Peer Review Slides

Appendix 2 – LGA Peer Review Feedback Letter

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval. ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council. ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council’s position. ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months. ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: N/A

Officer details:

Name: Rebecca Wilshire
Job Title: Service Director

Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

West Berkshire Council Peer Challenge

Feedback from the peer challenge team

Peer challenge 28-31 January 2025

Presentation: 31 January 2025



The peer challenge team

- DCS lead peer - Stephen Kitchman, LB Bexley
- Social care peer - Warren Petitjean, Newcastle
- Social care peer - Oluwatoyin Akinrinlade, Hertfordshire
- Education peer - Eddie Huntington, AD Education, Stockton
- LGA Peer challenge manager - Jonathan Trubshaw



The purpose of peer challenge

- Provides councils and partners with an external view on the effectiveness of the strategic response and the quality of practice.
- Conducted in an open and honest manner that jointly identifies strengths & areas for consideration.
- Provides feedback based on a brief engagement with the Council and partners.



The process of peer challenge

- Peers reviewed a range of information to ensure we were familiar with the council, the challenges it is facing and its plans for the future
- The peer team gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings, in addition to further research
- We spoke to more than 75 people including a range of council staff together with families, lead member and external stakeholders



Scope and brief for the peer challenge (Key Lines of Enquiry)

1. Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model is being utilised to its full potential
2. Is there evidence of Management Oversight, Case Supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout
3. Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm
4. Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs
5. Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?



Overall messages and observations - 1

- Appetite and enthusiasm for change – need for prioritisation
- The workforce is enthusiastic, committed and connected in working for West Berkshire and their families
- Leadership and management have a clear focus and are working towards improving quality of social work and education practice
- Strong political and corporate support for children's services
- Good operational relationships



Overall messages and observations - 2

- Operationally strong, needs greater strategic focus and informed challenge
- Limited evidence of partnership governance arrangements and impact
- Social workers and managers' case loads and workplace demands are high
- High levels of activity to find ingenious solutions to meet the needs of West Berkshire's children in the absence of clear partnership strategies

What people have said to us

CiN overlooked
sometimes because of
the high case loads
(Manager)

I love working here
(Social worker)

The SW is amazing in
my life, changed things
around
(Parent)

I asked CSC for
help, they listened,
they took things on
board and helped
my family
(Parent)

SW listens...I like this
SW
(9 yr child)

We are people who see
children as their focus
and make it work as
children are at our hart
(Education)

Some of the best work I
have done is with fathers
(Practitioner)

We're getting there, we
just need to keep going
(Snr manager)

No school is at risk of
slipping through a
safeguarding gap
(Head teacher)

Something we are
developing
(Social worker)

CP Chairs don't always
listen
(Non-SW professional)



Evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model utilised to full potential

Strengths

- FSM is an appropriate model for West Berkshire to adopt
- Investment in training is seen as positive by staff
- FSM working well in some of the children's files seen
- Recruitment of some multi-agency staff to implement the model
- Staff are enthusiastic for the model
- Connected with a FSM community of practice



Evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model utilised to full potential

Areas for consideration

- FSM strategic oversight is unclear – no evident evaluation schedule with clear project plan and milestones
- High case loads are impacting on the implementation of the model
- Inconsistent application by social workers – fidelity to the model
- Interventions not always analysed for impact
- No overall impact data
- Cultural genograms not evidenced

Evidence of management oversight, case supervision - child's voice throughout

Strengths

- Data reports on the frequency of supervision
- Supervision recorded in case files
- FSM seen in the structure of supervision
- Commitment and evidence of clear child's voice and family feedback
- Supportive and responsive leadership and management team
- Staff report feeling safe in their work



Evidence of management oversight, case supervision - child's voice throughout

Areas for consideration

- Most supervision, evidenced from files, was task orientated with limited reflection
- Limited specificity of actions, expectations and timescales
- No clearly articulated system for ensuring child/family feedback and quality assurance that activity leads to changes in practice
- Commitment to auditing files not being fully realised





Evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm

Strengths

- Positive feedback from partners on the immediate safety of children
- Evidence from majority of files that appropriate decisions are taken and recorded
- Children seen in a timely manner
- Management is available and accessible
- Co-location of all children's services helps with support and decision making



Evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm

Areas for consideration

- Timeliness of implementation of decisions
- Limited evidence of reflective supervision
- Limited evidence of partner involvement in group supervision
- Management oversight of CiN plans
- High percentage of s47 enquiries not requiring ICPC



Evidence of child protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs

Strengths

- Permanent, stable and experienced team
- Chairs have pre-meetings with social care team
- Conferences are well chaired
- Chairs actively looking to include parents and child's voice
- Evidence of appropriate escalation by CP chairs



Evidence of child protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs

Areas for consideration

- Engagement of fathers
- Plans are long and contain a high number of actions
- Conversion to plan is low – high use of resource in preparations
- Capacity of CP chairs and IROs
- Conference and review timeliness/repeat CP plans

Evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education

Strengths

- Individual agencies are aware of statutory requirements
- Partnership working between SEN and children's social care is developing
- Schools met are confident that there is oversight of children not in FTEd
- Evidence of Youth Justice effective practice with children not in FTEd
- Alternative provision works effectively in most cases

Evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education

Areas for consideration

- Role of virtual school is not fully developed
- No clear evidence of strategic oversight for children not in FTED



Recommendations - 1

1. Clarify and strengthen the governance and delivery arrangements for early help with partners
2. Use governance structures to develop resilience; not just a one council approach, a whole West Berkshire approach
3. Review governance and programme management arrangements:
 1. Mosaic
 2. Workforce development
 3. Family Safeguarding Model



Recommendations - 2

4. Review and evaluate the CiN pilot to determine how this is taken forward
5. Undertake a desktop review of children missing education
6. Review the SEF to fully reflect achievements, developments and future direction

Children's Services Peer Challenge

West Berkshire Council

28-31 January 2025

Feedback report





Contents

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5. Next steps	15

1. Executive summary

The appetite and enthusiasm for change in West Berkshire is clear from all the people the peer team spoke with. It is also clear that the workforce is committed and well connected within their communities. Work is being undertaken in a number of change projects and there is now a need for prioritisation to ensure that each element is planned, delivered and appropriately supported to achieve the desired outcomes.

Leadership and management have a clear focus and are working towards improving quality of social work and education practice. There is a clear understanding of the crossover and co-dependency within children's services, which is beginning to bring benefits for children and their families.

There is strong political and corporate support for children's services. The lead member is passionate and informed about the service and what it is trying to achieve. The authority is facing high levels of financial uncertainty and within this very challenging environment the Council has ensured that children are prioritised.

There are good operational relationships, both within children's services and with partner organisations, that are used to ensure services are delivered. However, frontline effectiveness needs to be matched with greater strategic focus and alignment, so that collective effort is being directed where it is most needed to deliver the agreed outcomes.

The 'golden thread' connecting frontline practice, through service plans to directorate and corporate objectives was underdeveloped. There was little evidence of informed challenge to ensure that projects are monitored, with a clear understanding of milestones, delivery, resources and timescale.

There is partnership oversight at a high level from police, ICB and the Children's Safeguarding Partnership. However, it was less clear how this translated to priorities at a West Berkshire level and how the shared endeavour was being delivered jointly with partners. There was limited evidence of partnership governance arrangements and impact monitoring at a local level. Partners could not articulate what for them was specifically a West Berkshire priority.

There is a clear recognition that social workers and managers' caseloads are too

high. Recruitment and development programmes are in place with the aim of bringing these down. However, these will take time to reduce caseloads to the preferred levels and in the meantime workplace demands are high. Managers are multi-tasking, leading on operational and strategic work whilst also being the main delivery agent on some of the projects.

There are clearly high levels of activity. In the absence of clear partnership strategies people are finding work arounds and ingenious solutions to meet the needs of West Berkshire's children.

2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

2.1 Clarify and strengthen the governance and delivery arrangements for early help with partners

Early help is a key area to be developed to ensure a positive impact on the numbers of children in need, child protection plans and the stability to deliver the family safeguarding model. Addressing the strategy, action plan, and partnership buy-in as a priority is necessary to ensure that the impact is clearly demonstrated.

2.2 Use governance structures to develop resilience; not just a one council approach, a whole West Berkshire approach

Ensure full engagement from the integrated care board (ICB) to shared priorities, actions and possibly funding. A partnership rich, strategic SEND board could be put in place to map out joint commissioning work as well as the development of shared priorities related to health, SEND and voluntary services support. A review of Education Partnership arrangements may be prudent to explore a forum to agree joint endeavours between schools and the local authority outside of statutory and school led forums. Agreements need to be in place for complex needs with a shared commitment to partnership solutions and shared funding agreements.

2.3 Review governance and programme management arrangements

There are a number of initiatives being taken forward at the same time, including workforce development, the embedding of the family safeguarding model and the child in need pilot (CiN). Determine which areas of work are priorities at any one moment. Ensure that attention is given to these and outcomes achieved against defined strategic objectives, so that focus can then shift to another area.

2.4 Undertake a desktop review of children missing education

Consider commissioning an independent and external review of existing practices and governance arrangements so you are satisfied that they are fit for purpose.

2.5 Review the SEF to fully reflect achievements, developments and future direction

The current SEF document does not provide a full and evidenced portrait of the challenges for children and their families in West Berkshire - and how these are being addressed. There is a clear self-awareness within the service that is not fully replicated in the SEF, which should be redrafted as a priority.

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- Stephen Kitchman, Director of Children's Services, LB Bexley
- Warren Petitjean, Service Manager in Children's Social Care, Newcastle City Council
- Oluwatoyin Akinrinlade, Service Manager in Family Safeguarding Service (East), Hertfordshire County Council
- Eddie Huntington, Assistant Director Education, Inclusion and Achievement, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Jonathan Trubshaw, LGA Associate, Peer challenge manager

3.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following themes which form the core components of all Children's Services Peer Challenges:

1. Leadership and management, including vision and strategy
2. Effective practice and impact on outcomes for children and families
3. Resources and capacity – are leaders creating the right environment for good social work practice?

In addition to these questions, the council asked the peer team to provide feedback on:

1. Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model is being utilised to its full potential
2. Is there evidence of Management Oversight, Case Supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout
3. Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm
4. Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs
5. Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?

3.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of children's services to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team

then spent 4 days onsite at West Berkshire, during which they:

- Reviewed 16 children's files
- Gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke to more than 75 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.
- Obtained feedback from a number of families who currently access help and support from West Berkshire children's services, or families who recently no longer need help and support.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

4. Feedback

4.1 Leadership and management, including vision and strategy

There is clear and visible management and leadership support available to the staff. People interviewed said that managers are accessible and that there was a positive work culture.

The lead member is well informed on the issues for children's services and is passionate about the wellbeing of children and their families in West Berkshire. A clear dashboard of indicators would help in the effective challenge of the service. The use of data would also help the lead member to promote the achievements in children's service's, both inside the council and to partners.

Strategy and governance arrangements are not fully developed or utilised to effectively monitor progress. Detailed action plans, with clear milestones, are not always in place, so the informed use of resources cannot be objectively challenged. Evidence and data are currently held in numerous places, so that effective monitoring against milestones is not straightforward.

4.2 Effective practice and impact on outcomes for children and families

The peer team spoke with frontline practitioners who are clearly passionate about

working for West Berkshire and their children and families. People want to work for the council and have developed practical relationships with partner organisations to ensure solutions are found.

There is good practice evidenced in some of the case files reviewed, with evidence of family voice being gathered and recorded. Supervision was reported as taking place and recorded. More specific actions with allocated timescales are needed so that impact can be evidenced. Structured oversight and feedback are necessary to ensure activities meet strategic goals and facilitate learning.

As an example of good practice, the peer team observed a core group meeting which was well attended by relevant professionals. There is evidence that where possible, and age appropriate, the child attends their meeting and contributes to plan. The social worker was empathetic yet rightly challenged mother, whilst giving her a choice as to what support will help move the family forward. The multiagency network also rightly contributed, and collaboratively shared necessary actions - which all felt were achievable by the next meeting.

4.3 Resources and capacity – are leaders creating the right environment for good social work practice?

The Council acknowledges the resource challenges faced by children's services and there is corporate support available to address these issues.

There is strong evidence of some innovative work to recruit additional social workers, including maximising how the apprenticeship levy is used. Further consideration now needs to be given to wider workforce issues including wellness, so that the existing strong work on retention is famed and monitored within an overarching strategic framework. Multi-agency training and development, through the safeguarding partnership, appears to have been suspended. The workforce strategy should be brought forward as a priority and an annual training plan for children's social care implemented. The impact of learning and development could be monitored through the social work health-check - along with other workforce issues.

4.4 Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model (FSM) is being utilised to its full potential?

In the peer team's view, the FSM is an appropriate model for West Berkshire to adopt. It aligns with and supports the council's goals. Partners are being included, and practices are being adjusted to align with the model.

The investment in training and the opportunities to train, were seen as positive by staff and there was evidence in some of the children's files seen that the FSM was working well with examples of impact included. There has also been recruitment of some multi-agency staff to implement the model, which is seen as beneficial for the ongoing development of the model.

Staff are enthusiastic for the model and West Berkshire is connected with a wider FSM community of practice that facilitates the ongoing learning, development and knowledge regarding the model.

There has recently been a relaunch of the model with training and drive to increase uptake. The specifics of the FSM's strategic oversight regarding what is being refreshed and the methods used are not clear. It would be beneficial to have an implementation plan with an evaluation schedule, including clear milestones and a plan to sustain developments. It is also important to be clear who is leading the strategy, holding partners to account and monitoring progress.

High caseloads are impacting on the implementation of the model. Evidence from the practitioners who the peer team met was that enthusiasm for FSM is high although workload constraints mean that they cannot implement all the elements that they would like to. Balancing caseloads would facilitate a more consistent application of the model by social workers and a stronger fidelity to the model would have a greater impact on outcomes for children and their families; the peer team is aware that this is understood and is a focus for senior leaders.

A dashboard for monitoring the effectiveness and impact of using the FSM would be helpful. Currently, interventions are not always analysed for impact. Bringing together selected existing data to provide overall impact would help to focus on areas of the model that need to be embedded and developed.

In the files seen by the peer team there was little evidence of cultural genograms. The broader system generated genograms were in files and these now need to be enhanced so that there is the right level of information presented to align with the right support.

Staff are growing in confidence in using Motivational Interviewing (MI) to work with children, young people and their parents to bring about sustainable changes. However, the use of Family Safeguarding Modules (programme designed to work with parents) is still in the infancy stage. The children services ICT system creates the modules as a tick box exercise and is linked to statutory visit instead of schedule of intervention completed with parent(s), stepparents for best outcomes for their children.

The peer team observed a group supervision with positive and appropriate involvement from relevant adults' workers. Key issues were identified, action agreed to provide a prompt response, and updates provided on progress. Overall, the evidence from supervision demonstrates the benefits of the family safeguarding model in providing effective services to children and their families.

4.5 Is there evidence of management oversight and case supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout?

There are data reports on the frequency of supervision, and this is tracked by the performance board. Supervision is recorded in case files and there is evidence in the structure of supervision that the FSM is clearly being adopted.

The peer team was impressed by the evidence of clear child's voice and family feedback in the case files seen. The case files demonstrate a commitment to engaging with families and this was well recorded. The child's voice was also clearly present in the documentation from conference meetings, and this should be seen as positive practice.

However, there is no clearly articulated system for ensuring that the child/family feedback collected is comprehensively interrogated so that good practice is highlighted and learning is shared across the teams. A quality assurance system that identifies themes from children and families feedback and creates a programme of activities that systemically lead to influence and changes in practice would be of benefit.

Staff spoke positively about the work culture within West Berkshire, describing being

well supported by a responsive leadership and management team. Frontline workers said that there was a 'no blame' culture and that they felt safe to make decisions, which were well supported. Managers were available and accessible when needed for advice and guidance.

Most supervision, evidenced from the files seen, was task orientated with limited evidence of reflection. When reflective supervision is provided this needs to be recorded to demonstrate the breadth and depth of practice within West Berkshire.

For some of the task orientated supervision there was limited specificity regarding the actions identified, with unclear expectations as to what the outcomes should be or the timescales within which the actions need to be undertaken.

There is a strong commitment to auditing case files, reinforced by a quality assurance approach that prioritises learning. However, not all files identified for audit were seen within the timescale and there was no obvious mechanism for escalating or exempting files. This can result in trends being formulated on a smaller than ideal sample size.

4.6 Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm?

A consistent observation from the peer team is that management, at both team and service levels, is available and accessible to all staff. Managers are present and approachable, allowing staff to confidently address issues. The co-location of all children's services provides advantages in support and decision-making processes.

The peer team received positive feedback from partners on the responsiveness of the service. When an immediate safety concern for children arose, managers and frontline staff handled the situation promptly and comprehensively. This means that children are seen, appropriate decisions are taken in line with procedures and that these are recorded in the case files.

Evidence from some internal partners suggested that the implementation of some, non-urgent, decisions took longer than was expected. There was also limited evidence of partner involvement in group supervision. This may be a limitation of the FSM templates and clarification is needed when recording the involvement of others

e.g. adult services.

Social workers appreciate that they are able to chair their own children in need (CiN) reviews and this was seen as evidence of managerial trust. However, when there is a decision for closure or step-down, additional managerial oversight – potentially from a different team – would provide increased rigour. Enhanced management oversight of plans may also help reduce rereferral rates.

Conference chairs hold a pre-meeting with social workers before a conference takes place. This routine step builds in a positive element of quality assurance. However, there appears to be a high percentage of s47 enquiries that go to an initial child protection case conference where a plan is then not made. Senior leaders provided a narrative behind these percentages, including a large sibling group in one family, if not supported on child protection plan at conference, affects the overall percentage. This may be an area that leaders wish to explore further to evidence narratives within data reports and thematic audit activity.

4.7 Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs?

There is a permanent, stable and experienced team of child protection (CP) chairs and this provides consistency in decision making. Conference chairs hold a pre-meeting with social workers before a conference takes place. This routine step builds in a positive element of quality assurance.

The conference chairs in conjunction with the social workers prioritise the need for the child's voice to be heard at conference. Age appropriately, children are invited to their conference, and they adopt the 'opt out' approach, promoting expectations of inclusion from the onset. Advocates are used appropriately to support children to amplify their voices in conference. The peer team found in one of the casefiles that they reviewed, a report completed by the child's advocate - voicing her views about mother's partners, her mother and her social worker and what she would like to see happen.

The conferences observed by the peer team were well chaired with the chairs

actively looking to include parents and children's voice.

There was evidence of appropriate escalation by the chairs. This was seen by the peer team during care reviews and confirmed during the focus discussion.

From the review undertaken of children's files, it was noted that there could have been more consistent engagement of fathers in the child protection process. Whilst noting this as a development area for many local authorities, the involvement of fathers and mother's partners appear to be limited to them attending a meeting and/or being present during home visits. Concerted efforts need to be made to explore the history of fathers/mother's partners and collaboratively agree on the right change work required resulting in best outcomes for children and young people.

Child protection plans are often very detailed and long, containing a high number of actions – sometimes with a list of sub-actions. The peer team understands that this issue is currently being considered, particularly how to appropriately reflect the involvement and concerns from the various members of the multi-disciplinary teams. Where practical, plans should be made with a focused actions that are easily understandable and achievable. This would help with the time spent monitoring, as one plan reviewed had over 30 actions listed.

The CP chairs also take on the role and responsibilities of independent reviewing officers (IROs). The peer team received some comments that caseloads were high and capacity may be an issue. Although the data suggests that caseloads appeared to be manageable this may be an issue to review, as well as an assessment of capacity to further support the case file auditing process.

Conference and review timeliness is low. The reasons as to why this is not at one hundred percent should be investigated and actions determined to address the issues. This should also apply to understanding the reasons for repeat CP plans and identifying the support that children and their families are accessing.

4.8 Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?

There was evidence that the individual agencies are aware of the statutory requirements regarding children not in full time education (FTEd). Partnership

working between the whole of the education department – including special educational needs (SEN) - and children's social care is being strengthened further. Children's social care and education being on the same floor of the council's offices has helped people exchange information and work to a one council ethos.

The schools that met the peer team are confident that there is oversight of children not in FTEd. This was supported by evidence in some of the case files that social workers considered oversight to be in place. The head teachers showed that they were knowledgeable about their students and their situations. There was also good evidence of effective practice from the youth justice service with children not in FTEd, which is of particular importance given the level of exclusions and suspensions within the cohort.

Alternative provision was seen to work effectively in most cases. The iCollege appears to work well, with most children entering and leaving the provision as intended. There was an example of one child who had stayed longer in iCollege with no scope of next step in view. It is however noted that this is an exception rather than the norm.

The role of the virtual school, although not explored in depth, appears to offer potential for further enhancement of support for children in need. In line with the increased extended duties of the virtual school, there is greater freedom to develop this service to support the needs of those not in school or in part time education. Those working in the virtual school recognised this and are considering how the offer can be extended. Any developments should also include the strengthening of strategic oversight for children not in FTEd, including mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring that no children become stuck in the alternative provision. The links with key educational partners in schools along with more structured planning for support to understand and negotiate support towards re-integration rather than a permanent move out of school into another non-special school provision could include an enhanced training offer as well as challenge when moves are not in the child or young person's best interests. Where a move to a special school is needed this should follow direction from further multi agency decision making. In this way AP could be developed to support the young person and the school and not a shortcut to specialist provision. The challenge of the virtual school could be essential to its long-term success.



5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge and the LGAs Children's Improvement Adviser will also be in touch to discuss any further support that can be offered to support the implementation of recommendations in this report.

In the meantime, Mona Sehgal, Principal Adviser (mona.sehgal@local.gov.uk), and Helen Watson, Children's Improvement Adviser (helen.watson5@icloud.com) are the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association.

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Castle Gate Overview Report

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	5 th June 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	April 2025
Report Author:	Dora Gouveia Schofield

1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to inform Members about the Castle Gate Short Break Service and the outcome of its most recent Ofsted inspection, conducted on 18–19 March 2025, in which the service received an 'Outstanding' rating.

2 Recommendation(s)

For the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to note the Ofsted findings and improvements.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial implications from this report
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications from this report
Legal:	There are no legal implications from this report
Risk Management:	There are risk implications from this report
Property:	There are no property implications from this report
Policy:	There are no policy implications from this report

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				There is no decision being sought within this report.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				There is no decision being sought within this report.
Environmental Impact:				There is no decision being sought within this report and no proposals
Health Impact:				
ICT Impact:				
Digital Services Impact:				
Council Strategy Priorities:				
Core Business:				
Data Impact:				
Consultation and Engagement:				

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 Castle Gate is a residential short break service providing respite care for children and young people with learning disabilities and complex health needs.
- 4.2 Established in 2005 by West Berkshire Council and Newbury Primary Care Trust (now part of Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust), it continues to offer essential support to families and high-quality care for those who need it most.
- 4.3 On the 18th and 19th March 2025, Castle Gate had their Ofsted Inspection, and the service was judged as Outstanding.
- 4.4 This report is a covering report to the Ofsted Report (see appendix)

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The purpose of this report is to share the Ofsted Inspection Report with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Background

- 5.2 Currently, 20 children benefit from regular short breaks at Castle Gate, while two children are in the process of induction. Due to high demand, there is a waiting list of nine children, highlighting the vital role the service plays in supporting families and ensuring children receive the care they need. All children that attend Castle Gate have an allocated social worker within Children with Disabilities team.
- 5.3 Castle Gate is registered with Ofsted to provide short breaks for up to six children and young people at any given time.
- 5.4 Following a full Ofsted inspection on 18th and 19th March 2025 across two days the service was awarded an OUTSTANDING rating across all three key areas:
 - Overall experiences and progress of children and young people
 - How well children and young people are helped and protected
 - The effectiveness of leaders and managers
- 5.5 The Ofsted report praises the aspirational approach of the team and highlights how the service continues to deliver high-quality care and support for children and young people, ensuring their safety, well-being, and development.
- 5.6 The Outstanding rating achieved in the latest Ofsted inspection is a significant milestone, showcasing the exceptional quality of care provided to our children and young people and reinforcing our commitment to continuous service development.
- 5.7 Through rigorous reviewing and monitoring systems, and new Management who remain focused on high quality practice, Castle Gate has consistently evolved, making measurable progress. From a **Requires Improvement** rating in December 2018 and June 2019, we advanced to **Good** in May 2021, March 2023, and September 2023,

culminating in an **Outstanding** rating in March 2025 - a testament to our dedication and ongoing enhancements in care standards.

- 5.8 Castle Gate is committed to supporting families and delivering the highest level of care to our clients, ensuring that every child and young person is supported to thrive and achieve the best possible outcomes.



Next Steps

- 5.9 Castle Gate will continue to provide high-quality care for children and young people, ensuring their well-being in a safe and nurturing environment.
- 5.10 We remain committed to maintaining exceptional standards through robust monitoring systems and quality assurance procedures.
- 5.11 Following a successful recruitment process, Castle Gate will now be fully staffed and ready to welcome more children and young people from the waiting list.
- 5.12 We look forward to expanding our support, ensuring each child receives high-quality care and meaningful respite breaks.



6 Other options considered

No other being considered.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Castle Gate provides children with enriching and enjoyable experiences, while also offering essential respite for the families, fostering resilience and helping to prevent family breakdown.
- 7.2 We are immensely proud to have received an Outstanding Ofsted rating, a remarkable recognition that reflects our unwavering commitment to delivering the best possible service for children, young people, and their families.



8 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Full Ofsted report for Castle Gate SC030677, March 2025

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

Name: Dora Gouveia Schofield
Job Title: Principal Social Worker and Academy Lead
Tel No: 01635 503995
E-mail: dora.gouveiaschofield1@westberks.gov.uk

Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

SC030677

Registered provider: West Berkshire Council - Social Care

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a local authority and provides short breaks for children with physical and learning disabilities. The home is registered to provide overnight stays for up to six children.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2024.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 March 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 26 September 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/09/2023	Full	Good
30/03/2023	Full	Good
18/05/2021	Full	Good
24/02/2020	Interim	Not judged

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff support children to make excellent progress. This includes children developing their communication, self-care and independence skills. Staff continually aspire for children to develop their skills and experiences, at a pace that is individual to each child.

Children enjoy their short-break stays and are excited to arrive and to see who else they will be staying with, pointing at photos of their friends and the staff looking after them.

There is a small cohesive staff team, who know the children well and work together to provide them with the best possible experiences. The home is well resourced and includes a sensory room and a variety of toys that children like to play with. Children enjoy a range of activities in the community, including going to the farm, soft play centres, museums and pantomimes. Videos and pictures are shared with parents so that they can see the activities and fun that their children are having while away from home.

Staff have positive relationships with parents and communicate with them effectively. Parents feel confident that their children are happy and safe when using the service. One parent said that the home was fantastic, the staff are great and their child loves attending short breaks.

Staff are skilled at supporting children's health needs and have suitable and relevant training. Children have highly detailed health plans to enable staff to respond to their needs. Staff work jointly with specialist nurses, occupational health and paediatricians to ensure that the children's specific health needs are met.

Staff use children's individual communication aids to help the children to share their views, wishes and feelings. This helps children to choose the activities and meals that they would like during their stay. The consistent use of communication tools has supported children to develop and expand their communication skills.

The home is well maintained and contains all the equipment and supportive aids that the children need. Each bedroom has a theme, and they are all well furnished. When children arrive, they can choose their own bedding to help personalise their bedroom.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Safeguarding concerns and incidents are rare. However, the manager and staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding processes and know how to respond to any potential safeguarding concerns, should they arise.

Positive behaviour is celebrated, and children are regularly praised for achievements or for trying new activities. This is recognised through certificates and the home's 'wow'

board. Children like receiving this recognition and praise and are proud of their achievements.

Staff support children to understand safety in the home, including what to do if the fire alarms sound, how to make a complaint or what to do if they feel they are being bullied. Pictorial prompts help children to understand these processes.

Children are generally settled when having overnight stays. They do not go missing from home and staff do not need to use physical interventions. Staff recognise changes in children's behaviours, allowing them to quickly respond to small changes in presentation or behaviour. The positive relationships between staff and children allow staff to provide reassurance and comfort to ensure that children do not become distressed.

The home has specialist equipment to support staff to meet the children's needs. This includes specialist beds and a spa bath that the children particularly enjoy. Risk assessments are in place for all equipment and their use is reviewed by an occupational therapist. However, the in-house assessments do not always detail which professional has authorised the assessment for the specialist equipment. This has not had any negative impact on children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is aspirational for the service. She uses monitoring and review systems to continually improve the home and the children's experiences, and to ensure that staff are constantly developing their skills. The manager's knowledge of the children, the progress that they have made and how they can continue to develop is supporting children's ongoing achievements.

The manager's partnership working with other professionals is a key strength. Joint team meetings are held with social workers every six months. In addition, the manager meets with the manager of the children with disability social work team to identify new children coming into the service, to look at referrals and to discuss the needs and progress of the children who are already staying at the home. This allows for information-sharing and helps to understand who is responsible for what and how they can work together effectively to better support children.

Social workers are exceptionally positive about the service, the care that children receive and the level of communication with the staff. One social worker said the standard of care and the support to help the children develop their self-care skills are excellent.

The manager has built positive relationships with the staff at the on-site school, which has enabled consistency of practice with the children in the home and the school.

The manager uses research-informed practice sessions in monthly team meetings to help staff to further develop their skills and knowledge, and to share good practice. These monthly meetings are being used effectively and are an information-sharing forum as well as a place for learning and development.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that when staff review children's plans, they identify which health professional has originally made the decision regarding the need for the particular approach to the child's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 36, paragraph 7.20)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC030677

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: West Berkshire Council - Social Care

Registered provider address: Council Office, Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5LD

Responsible individual: Dora Gouveia-Schofield

Registered manager: Joanna Romanowska

Inspector

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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OFSTED Thematic Review Findings

Committee considering report:	Corporate Board
Date of Committee:	15 th April 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	Hannah Geddert; SEND Strategy Officer

1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the findings from the recent thematic review of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who are not in school, conducted by OFSTED and the CQC.

2 Recommendation(s)

To note the key findings from the OFSTED Thematic Review (full letter in Appendix A).

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	N/A for this report.
Human Resource:	N/A for this report.
Legal:	N/A for this report.
Risk Management:	N/A for this report.
Property:	N/A for this report.
Policy:	<u>National</u> Thematic Review of Children not in School in local areas

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				As this report provides an update, rather than a request for a decision, an equalities impact assessment is not applicable in this instance.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				As this report provides an update, rather than a request for a decision, an equalities impact assessment is not applicable in this instance.
Environmental Impact:				N/A for this report.
Health Impact:				N/A for this report.
ICT Impact:				N/A for this report.
Digital Services Impact:				N/A for this report.
Council Strategy Priorities:				This report provides an update, rather than proposals, and therefore it is not applicable to assess the positive or negative impact against the Council's Priorities.
Core Business:				N/A for this report.
Data Impact:				N/A for this report.

<p>Consultation and Engagement:</p>	<p>During the thematic visit, parents and carers were given the opportunity to meet directly with inspectors to share their experiences and perspectives. Additionally, surveys created by OFSTED and the CQC were distributed to both parents/carers, young people and professionals with the responses informing analysis and findings of the thematic review.</p> <p>Following the visit, the draft outcome letter was shared with key colleagues across the Local Authority and Integrated Care Board (ICB) to check for factual accuracy prior to its finalisation. A follow-up meeting is currently being arranged with the Chair of the Parent/Carer Forum to discuss the findings outlined in the final letter.</p>
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Area SEND Inspection system includes thematic visits to a small number of local areas each year, to investigate a particular aspect of the SEND system in depth.
- 4.2 West Berkshire was the first to be selected for OFSTED and CQC's thematic review focussing on children not in school.
- 4.3 Whilst we have received a letter outlining the findings from the thematic visit, this will not be published; instead, the learning will be aggregated into a national report designed to support whole-system improvement.
- 4.4 It is important to note that this was not a graded inspection, and no individual judgements have been made about the Local Area.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 This report presents a high-level summary of the findings from the OFSTED Thematic Review which focussed on children with SEND not in school.

Background

- 5.2 In recent years, there has been a growing focus on children missing school, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, with concerns about increased absence, especially persistent absence (missing 10% or more of school sessions).
- 5.3 The purpose of the OFSTED and CQC 2025 thematic visits is to better understand:
 - How the Local Area Partnership work together to meet the needs of children not in school across health, education and children's social care.
 - The reason why children with SEND leave full-time education, and what schools are doing to support them to remain in school.

- The role, and impact, of Local Authorities in supporting children with SEND to receive a suitable education.
- The role, and impact, of social care in supporting children with SEND who are in school and are in need of help and protection.
- The role, and impact, of health providers in meeting the health needs of children with SEND who are not in school.
- How Local Authorities support children not in school, particularly hard-to-reach children and families, including where there are safeguarding concerns.
- Parents', children's, practitioners' and leaders' views about why children are not in school and how their needs are being met.

5.4 For the purpose of the thematic review, children with SEND not in school was defined as:

- Children of compulsory school age, who are not registered pupils at a registered independent school or any type of state funded school.
- Children who are on a school roll but are flexi-schooled, on part-time timetables, receiving education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) or who are severely absent.

5.5 The letter following the thematic review outlines a number of key findings, including areas of strength as well as aspects we recognise improvements are needed.

5.6 The review did not highlight any issues that we were not already aware of through our own self-evaluation.

5.7 The key findings are summarised below:

5.8 Information Sharing

- Whilst dedicated professionals work on building trust with families who have become disengaged or distanced from a professional network, this is on a personalised, individual level, rather than part of a wider, more strategic approach.
- Whilst there is an online form to report Children Missing Education (CME), there is no clear strategy for alerting professionals across agencies when children are not in education.
- Families have strong multi-agency support to access, or remain in, education when children's social care is involved.
- Schools have an effective partnership with the Local Authority SEND team, who are easily accessible and provide timely support.

5.9 Access to Health Services

- Parents reported difficulty in accessing health services; particularly therapy support for children not attending school; often having to privately commission these services. This system is under review noting that there is a shortage of local therapists. For families who can use a Personal Budget for therapy, accessing support remains a challenge.
- A growing number of children are starting school with underdeveloped social skills, communication difficulties or requiring additional care e.g. toilet training. Headteachers reported that these needs can sometimes be seen as SEND rather

than gaps in learning. The development of Early Years strategies will begin to address this so that needs are identified early so the right help can be put in place to secure school attendance.

- Whilst some children who are not in education present at the Crisis Service with more acute mental health needs having not been identified earlier, those children on the Dynamic Support Register (DSR) benefit from multi-agency support and regular monitoring.
- Support and training from the Medical Tuition Service and NHS teams e.g. diabetic nurses' team helps to maintain attendance and improve the confidence of families that their child's needs can be met in school.
- The Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) team works effectively with Primary Schools to improve attendance. For Secondary schools it is a choice as to whether they 'buy-in' the services of this team resulting in a question about equitable support for children in secondary schools who experience EBSA.
- A clear pathway is becoming established to ensure the right support, in the right place, for the right children through a graduated approach.

5.10 Oversight of Provision

- There is ongoing work to identify the children most at risk of not being in education, using flags and alerts to identify these children.
- Commissioning arrangements for therapies are at an early stage of review due to the barriers of accessing this support for children who need therapy but do not attend school. It was recognised that we are working on implementing a joint brokerage and commissioning team with an ambition to coproduce this.
- The strategic oversight of children in Alternative Provision (AP) is underdeveloped, especially for those awaiting special school placements. Levels of oversight vary on a case-by-case basis. We recognise that there is more work to be done here.
- The Local Authority have a limited power to challenge schools on the six-week limit for part-time timetables.
- Data sharing remains a challenge due to differing recording systems used across maintained schools, academies, and independent schools. Unclear reporting requirements for children placed outside of the Local Authority has a negative impact on data analysis.
- There are not the powers for professionals to prevent a child from being removed from the school roll to Electively Home Educated (EHE) for example. Other than seeking court orders for this, it is hard for professionals to contribute towards this decision making.
- Offering Personal Budgets for children who are EHE to meet specific needs outlined in the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), increases engagement with these families and helps maintain oversight of the children's wellbeing and development.

5.11 Enablers and Barriers to Remaining in Education

- We are working to address gaps in attendance through targeted interventions and additional mental health support through the development of an Attendance Strategy and improvements in data and information systems.
- Parental anxiety around whether a school can meet their child's needs often leads to parents considering EHE. Attendance data shows that the primary needs for low

attenders are Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, followed closely by Autism.

- There is a shortage of placements, including specially resourced provisions for children with SEND, to meet needs locally. This contributes to increasing numbers of children not attending school or increasing numbers placed outside of the Local Area in special schools. It was recognised that there were plans in place to expand local specialist provision.
- Permanent exclusions are notably higher in secondary schools and for pupils with SEND. It was recognised that work is being done to foster a consistent culture of inclusion across schools.
- iCollege was recognised as playing a critical role in keeping children in education or helping them reintegrate into school.
- For children who are out of school receiving EOTAS or education under the Medical Tuition Service, robust processes ensure the right support is in place with children's voices central to these efforts.
- A profiling tool for children with potential neurodiverse needs is being piloted to gather evidence of needs, with plans to co-produce and roll it out for schools to better identify strengths and strategies to better meet the needs of children with SEND in mainstream settings.

5.12 Children Not in School who need Help & Protection

- Safeguarding in health services considers children not in education.
- Early Help and social care services are well-organised, focussing on relationship building and keeping children's needs at the centre of interventions.
- Early Help services address issues for children not in school affecting attendance and engagement with education effectively. There is a need to improve services for children who no longer require a social worker.
- Attendance at child in need meetings, core groups and looked after children reviews, helps address the challenges with education, such as improving children's attendance.
- The 'Right Service, Right Time' approach identifies families not making progress. In social care, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Child Protection Chairs take proactive steps to address issues affecting children's engagement in education. This could be strengthened by sharing learning about 'what works'.
- There are a range of resources available to support joint work with families e.g. youth workers in schools. However, there are some parts of the children's system where these skills cannot be directly accessed by social workers which we are looking at to overcome these barriers.
- Our well-engaged Virtual School offers a range of support to children and is effective at supporting children's education, working well with partners and supporting children well, even if they are placed in other Local Authorities and at a considerable distance to check if children are in school and take action if they are not.

5.13 It is important to note that **no safeguarding concerns were raised** during the thematic review.

Proposals

5.14 Not applicable for this report.

6 Other options considered

Not applicable for this report.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 In conclusion, this report summarises the findings outlined in the letter following the thematic review. It is important to recognise that some of the issues identified are part of broader national challenges, which cannot be addressed by the Local Area alone. However, learning from the review will contribute to a national report aimed at supporting whole-system improvements.
- 7.2 For those areas where improvements are needed at a local level, these have been incorporated into the SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan (Appendix B). Progress on delivery will be closely monitored through the SEND Strategic Improvement Board to ensure ongoing accountability and success.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Thematic Review of Children not in School Summary Note
- 8.2 Appendix B – DRAFT Innovation in SEND Delivery Plan 2025-2026 (See DBV Closedown report for details)

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Wards affected: N/A

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Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

25 March 2025

AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director of Children and Families' Services, West Berkshire Council.

Dr Nick Broughton, Chief Executive of NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB) ICB.

Dear Ms Dodds and Dr Broughton,

Ofsted and CQC visit to the West Berkshire Partnership

Following the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) joint visit to West Berkshire, I write on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills and the Chief Inspector of Primary Medical Services and Integrated Care of CQC to summarise the visit's findings. Thank you for the time you made available to participate in this thematic visit on children not in school.

Ofsted carried out this visit under a section 118(2) request from the Department for Education. The CQC provided assistance to Ofsted under paragraph 9(1) of schedule 4 to the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

The visit was carried out as part of a thematic review, the outcome of which will be aggregated into a national report to support whole-system improvement. This national report will be published on Ofsted's and CQC's websites. It was not a graded inspection.

Thank you for contributing valuable information. During the visit, we spoke to local area leaders, children and young people with SEND, their families, and the education, health and care professionals who work with them. We examined relevant documents and visited a sample of settings.

Context

The purpose of this series of visits is to aggregate insights about local area approaches to children not in school, to learn from existing practice and to identify opportunities for improvement.

You can find more information about how inspectors carried out the visit at:
<https://gov.uk/government/publications/thematic-reviews-of-children-not-in-school-in-local-areas>.

During the visit, you told us about the following themes:

Information Sharing

We were told:

- The recent re-organisation and co-location of teams across children's services, such as the SEND team and the education team, have contributed to improving information sharing.
- Efforts are underway to clarify service pathways for parents and professionals, with visual guides called 'pathways on a page' being developed to simplify the pathway processes.
- Dedicated professionals work on building trust with families who have become disengaged or distanced from a professional network. However, this work is personalised, focusing on individual cases rather than part of a wider, more strategic approach.
- The Children Missing Education (CME) team is establishing stronger information-sharing protocols with police and health partners. While an online form is available to report concerns, professionals told us there is no clearly understood strategy for alerting professionals across agencies when children are not in education. For example, if a health professional visits a home and finds a child not in school, not everyone is clear about how to share this information.
- When children's social care is involved, families receive strong multi-agency support to access or remain in education. However, while there are formal panels to share information, none focus specifically on children at risk of exclusion, those not in education, or those reintegrating into school. You told us that this is also an area under review for improved strategic oversight.
- Headteachers reported a strong collaborative network for school leaders which supports them share advice or guidance on keeping children in school. We heard reports of an effective partnership with the local authority SEND team, who are easily accessible and provide timely support to education professionals.
- The targeted pilot program focusing on attendance is underway with 10 schools, aimed at improving attendance and supporting the sharing of successful strategies. This initiative is still in its early stages.

Access to Health Services

We were told:

- Parents report difficulty accessing health services, especially therapy support, when their child is not in school. Currently, services such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech and language therapy are only available to children on a school roll. If a child with an education, health and care (EHC) plan is not in school, parents must privately commission these services. You told us this system is under review. Additionally, you told us that there is a shortage of local therapists, and it can be difficult to find therapists who can provide ongoing support, especially for children who are electively home educated (EHE) or have an education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) package.
- A growing number of children are starting school with underdeveloped social skills, communication difficulties, or requiring additional care like toilet training. Some professionals noted that support for parents before school starts has decreased over time, leading to some children spending extended periods in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Headteachers expressed a need for more pre-school support to help children become school-ready, so that they can attend well and maintain placements in mainstream settings. Head teachers noted that some of these challenges are sometimes seen as special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) rather than gaps in learning, which schools can address through ordinarily available provision. Efforts are underway for example, you told us about your focused development of early years strategies to begin to address this so that needs are identified early and the right help can be put in place to secure school attendance.
- Some children who are not in education are presenting at the Crisis Service with more acute mental health needs having not been identified earlier as needing more support. However, children on the Dynamic Support Register (DSR) benefit from multi-agency support and regular monitoring, leading to improved outcomes, lower risks and more engagement with services.
- Children not in school, who are open to the children with disabilities (CWD) team, have access to occupational therapy services. While families who electively home educate their children can use personal budgets for therapy, accessing the right support remains a challenge.
- The medical tuition service offers valuable training to schools with their duty to meet children's medical needs. Schools can also seek advice, and access training from NHS teams such as the diabetic nurses' team who help train staff to be confident to meet children's needs in school so that children with health needs can attend well. This helps to maintain attendance and improve the confidence of families that their child's needs can be met in school.
- The emotional based school avoidance (EBSA) team works effectively with primary schools to improve attendance. Secondary schools can choose to commission the EBSA team or implement other approaches. However, this

means it is unclear how equitable the support is for children in secondary schools.

- A clear pathway is becoming established to get the right support in place for the right children through a graduated approach. For example, providing support through the mental health schools team, EBSA support team and then the medical tuition service, as appropriate.

Oversight of Provision

We were told:

- There is ongoing work to use data to identify the children most at risk of not being in education, including the use of flags and alerts to help identify these children.
- Commissioning arrangements for therapies are at an early stage of review, this is because there are barriers to accessing this consistently for children who need therapies but do not attend a school. You are working on implementing a joint brokerage and commissioning team. There is an ambition to coproduce this, although this work is at a very early stage. You recognise the need for improved strategic oversight and are focussed on continuing to develop cohesive systems across the partnership. You know that there is scope and appetite for greater involvement of parents, carers and children in the commissioning and re-commissioning of some SEND services to ensure children not in school are able to access therapy.
- The strategic oversight of children in alternative provision (AP) is underdeveloped especially for those awaiting special school placements. Some children remain on school rolls but attend various un-registered AP, with the level of oversight varying on a case-by-case basis. There is a lack of broader strategic oversight for these vulnerable children who are not in school but attending AP, and you recognise that more work is needed to monitor and gather information about their situations.
- A small team monitors part-time timetables but lacks the capacity to oversee these children's cases as effectively as they would like to. We also heard of an 'accountability gap' between the duty of schools to report part-time timetable usage to the local authority and the limited power of the local authority to challenge schools on the six-week guidance limit for these timetables.
- Independent schools are offered strong support from the local authority attendance team, including training on accurate registration coding. However, sharing data remains a challenge due to differing reporting systems used across maintained schools, academies, and independent schools. We heard that this is further compounded by the unclear reporting requirements for

children placed outside the local authority, which has a negative impact on data analysis.

- Some professionals expressed frustration that they don't have powers to prevent a child being removed from school in order to be electively home educated, even when the professional network agree that it may not be in the child's best interest. Other than escalating to seeking court orders for this, it is hard for professionals to contribute to this decision-making.
- Leads for EHE and SEND reported that offering personal budgets to families with EHE children helps them to meet the specific needs outlined in EHC plans and increases engagement with these families. This helps the partnership to maintain oversight of these children's well-being and development.
- There are plans to develop a charter for coproduction (a way of working where children, families and those that provide the services work together to create a decision or a service that works for them all) with the parent carer forum (PCF). This aims to facilitate parents, including parents of children not in school, to be included in commissioning arrangements such as improving case discussions, decision-making, and EHC plan audits.

Enablers and Barriers to Remaining in Education

We were told:

- The development of an attendance strategy is in its early stages, with improvements in data and information systems to allow sharper analysis of children who are not in school. This work aims to address gaps in attendance through targeted interventions and additional mental health support.
- We heard from parents that confidence in whether schools can meet their child's needs is low. Additionally, education and health professionals explained that parental anxiety, especially regarding their child's anxiety about school, is a common factor among children with low attendance. This anxiety often leads parents to consider EHE. Additionally, there is an increase in requests for EOTAS packages. Data from the attendance team shows that the primary needs identified for low attenders are social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs, followed closely by autism.
- There is a shortage of specialist placements, including specially resourced provisions for children with SEND, to meet local needs. This contributes to increasing numbers of children not attending school. There are also numbers of children placed outside of the local authority area in special schools. Attendance teams face barriers to obtaining timely information about how well pupils placed outside of area attend, due to shortfalls in how swiftly information is shared from the national reporting systems used by local

authorities. We understand plans are in place to expand local specialist provision to help place pupils into the right local school.

- Permanent exclusions are notably higher in secondary schools, and for pupils with SEND. Sixth day provision is put in place, and transport is offered. However, we heard that appropriate home-to-school transport is not always available to help them to attend. You told us that work is being done to foster a consistent culture of inclusion across schools.
- The iCollege pupil referral unit plays a critical role in keeping children in education or helping them to reintegrate into school. Their outreach and in-reach work, along with a strong inclusion ethos, make them a valuable partner. They are also often central partners in many multi-agency discussions supporting children to re-engage with education. However, delays in securing home-to-school transport for children with SEND can result in them being out of school for long periods. The appeals process for transport is also lengthy.
- The iCollege have also worked closely with the local authority to re-purpose one of its sites to cater for some of the children with SEND who were not in school because they are waiting for a special school placement. This helps to maintain their inclusion in education and access to health or therapies.
- For children who are not in school but are receiving EOTAS or education under the medical tuition service, robust processes ensure the right support is in place. These packages are regularly reviewed and tailored to each child's needs, aiming to reintegrate them into full-time education. Children's voices are central to these efforts, and when they are actively involved in decisions about their education, it can be a strong motivator for continued engagement.
- The occupational therapy service has an offer for some schools to identify environmental factors affecting attendance and engagement, particularly for children with sensory processing needs. A profiling tool for children with potential neurodiverse needs is being piloted to gather evidence of needs, with plans to co-produce and roll it out for schools to better identify strengths and strategies to better meet the needs of children with SEND in mainstream settings.

Children Not in School Who Need Help and Protection

We were told:

- Safeguarding in health services considers children not in education, ensuring their vulnerabilities are addressed. Early help and social care services are well-organised, focusing on relationship-building and keeping children's needs at the centre of interventions.

- Early help services address issues for children not in school affecting attendance and engagement with education effectively, with smooth transitions to appropriate levels of support. However, we heard about the need to improve services for children who no longer require a social worker but still need support to sustain progress, and in a small number of instances they are unable to access this.
- The approach across statutory social care and early help services is relationship-based. Children's voices inform the work, and families are included in planning so that the interventions offered consider family strengths, are realistic, and are therefore more likely to achieve the desired outcomes.
- We heard that partnership working across all areas of early help and social care helps identify children who are not in school or not attending well. Multi-agency input is provided via the early help hub when specialist services are required. Attendance at child in need meetings, core groups and looked after children reviews helps address challenges with education, such as improving children's attendance.
- The "Right Service, Right Time" approach identifies families not making progress. In social care, we heard that Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Child Protection chairs maintain oversight and take proactive steps to address issues affecting children's engagement with education. We heard that in some areas there is a need to better understand and evidence this progress to help further strengthen services, for example by sharing the learning about 'what works'.
- There are a range of resources available to support joint work with families. Some of these, such as youth workers in schools and the 'Swings and Smiles' service, make a tangible difference to the issues that affect school attendance and engagement. There are some parts of the children's system where these considerable skills, such as targeted youth work, cannot be directly accessed by social workers to support children. We have heard that you are looking at how to overcome these barriers.
- A well engaged and valued virtual school offers a range of support to children, in particular to those who are looked after. This is effective at supporting children's education, working well with partners and supporting children well even where they are placed in other local authorities and at considerable distance to check if they are in school and to take action if they are not. It also offers consultation support to social workers for children with child in need and child protection plans, assisting with their educational progress.

Next steps

We will use the information we have gathered when writing the national report that sets out our findings. We plan to publish this in Autumn 2025.

Yours sincerely

Jo Petch

His Majesty's Inspector, Ofsted

Russel Breyer

His Majesty's Inspector, Ofsted

Tessa Valpy

Children's Services Inspector, CQC

Delivering Better Value (DBV) Close Down Report

Committee considering report:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	5 th June 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	Hannah Geddert; SEND Strategy Officer

1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the progress achieved through the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme. This report also outlines the anticipated cumulative cost avoidance on the high needs block, next steps and priorities for sustaining improvements beyond the programme's formal end.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Note the progress made through the DBV programme, including anticipated cumulative cost avoidance on the high needs block.
- 2.2 Endorse the proposed next steps.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>The financial impact of the DBV programme was never expected to be immediate, however, we are already beginning to see some encouraging signs of positive financial outcomes.</p> <p>The DBV programme has already generated an additional in-year saving of £534,716 through the enhancement of the Early Years Transition programme. This programme's funding is replicated for 2025/26, and similar levels of savings are anticipated year on year. This is in addition to DBV savings already predicted (cumulative additional total: £4,490,864)</p> <p>Further additional mitigations have also been identified and have been included in the Deficit Management Plan (DMP) in relation to specialist capacity development to reduce dependence on Independent Non-Maintained provision.</p>

Human Resource:	N/A			
Legal:	N/A			
Risk Management:	N/A			
Property:	N/A			
Policy:	<p><u>Local Policy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-29 • West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023-27 <p><u>National Policy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Equality Act 2010 • The Children & Families Act 2014 • The SEND Code of Practice 2015 			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			While this paper is intended as an update rather than a decision, it is important to note that the DBV programme and SEND & Inclusion Strategy (Innovation in SEND Programme) are designed to reduce inequalities by improving access to support and services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

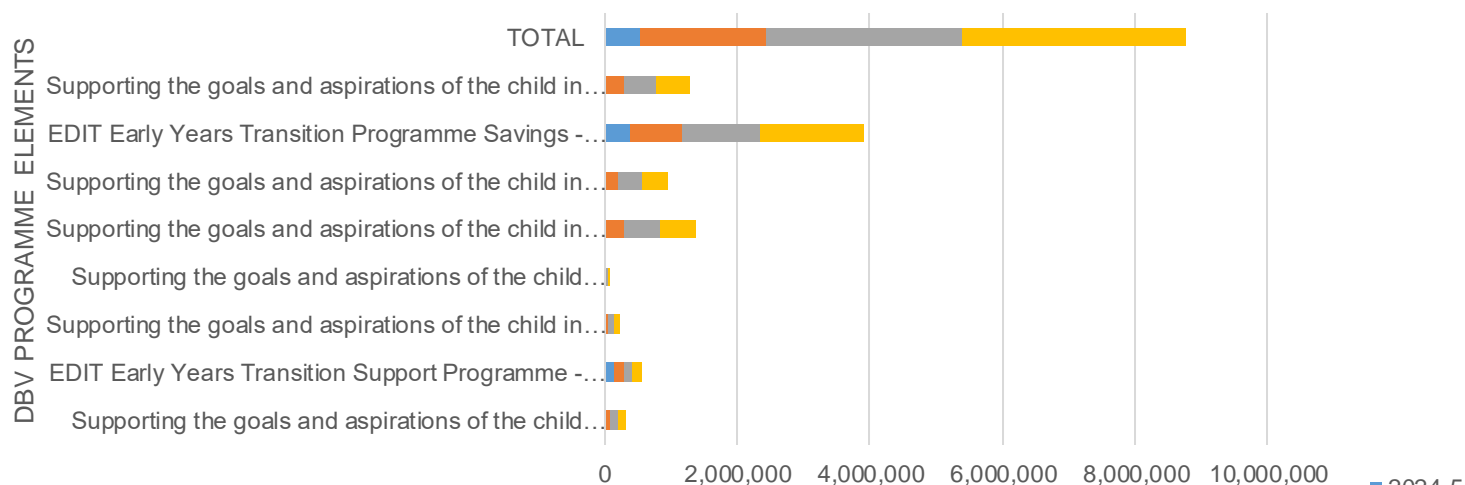
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			By promoting earlier intervention, more inclusive practices, and a better understanding of local need, the programme aims to positively impact those with protected characteristics – particularly children and young people with disabilities – ensuring they receive the right support at the right time in a way that promotes equity, inclusion and improved life outcomes.
Environmental Impact:				N/A
Health Impact:	X			Health partners have been actively involved in the DBV programme and the delivery of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy, ensuring a more joined-up approach to meeting the holistic needs of children and young people with SEND, supporting better outcomes.
ICT Impact:				N/A
Digital Services Impact:				N/A

Council Strategy Priorities:	X			<p><u>Priority 1: Services we are proud of</u> The Innovation in SEND Programme supports this priority by driving improvements in the quality, consistency and inclusivity of services for children and young people with SEND. It promotes collaboration across education, health and care and ensures that support is shaped by the voices and experiences of families. This helps to build services that are responsive, effective and truly reflective of local need.</p> <p><u>Priority 2: A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all</u> The programme contributes to this priority by reducing inequalities and improving access to support for children and young people with SEND. It promotes early intervention, inclusive education and joined up working across agencies, enabling children and young people to achieve better outcomes regardless of their background or level of need.</p>
Core Business:				N/A
Data Impact:				N/A
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>Although still in its early stages, the newly formed West Berkshire Parent/Carer forum has been actively involved in the Innovation in SEND Programme (DBV and SEND & Inclusion Strategy).</p> <p>The DBV programme has helped to refresh and strengthen engagement with parents, carers, and families, as well as with partner agencies – including health and schools. This has included the development of the Innovation in SEND blog, which shares key updates and progress of the work undertaken as part of the Innovation in SEND programme.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report marks the closure of the DBV programme. The DBV programme has provided the impetus to drive transformation in SEND which now needs to be consolidated and developed over the lifetime of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy.
- 4.2 The mitigations anticipated by Newton Europe and the DBV Programme are due to commence in **September 2025**, with a cumulative impact over the next 5 years and informed the deficit management plan (DMP).

Delivering Better Value Programme - Mitigated Savings - 2024-2028



	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child without the need for an EHCP- at SEN Support	EDIT Early Years Transition Support Programme - AT SEN Support	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child in Independent Special School (INMSS) at a more effective average unit cost	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child through Alternative provision rather than Independent Special School (INMSS)	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child in Maintained Special School (MSS) at a more effective average unit cost	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child in a Mainstream setting rather than Maintained Special School (MSS)	EDIT Early Years Transition Programme Savings - EHC plans in Mainstream rather than Special	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child in a Mainstream setting rather than in an Independent Special School (INMSS)	TOTAL
■ 2024-5		142,716					392,000		534,716
■ 2025-6	72,000	142,716	54,000	21,000	311,000	214,000	784,000	292,000	1,890,716
■ 2026-7	123,000	142,716	93,000	37,000	533,000	367,000	1,176,000	500,000	2,971,716
■ 2027-8	123,000	142,716	93,000	37,000	533,000	367,000	1,568,000	500,000	3,363,716

SAVINGS = £

- 4.3 Although progress towards these mitigations has been good, the demand for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) continues to increase, as does the need for further specialist SEND provision.

- 4.4 Early identification and intervention will continue to drive down the need for EHCNAs to access appropriate support. Working in partnership with families and wider service providers, including the ICB, will improve access to targeted SEND support.
- 4.5 Implementing the findings from the co-produced SEND funding review will support schools in accessing appropriate levels of funding in a timely fashion to support SEND pupils.
- 4.6 Developing capacity in mainstream and special schools, and alternative provision, is a priority to drive down the costs of specialist provision and the requirement to place in high-cost independent non-maintained schools. Additional, short, medium and longer-term specialist provision is in development commencing between September 2025-2028.
- 4.7 Instigated Transition Programmes have already demonstrated significant cost savings and incorporating these into longer term programmes around inclusion would be beneficial.
- 4.8 However, pressure remains, whilst Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) numbers continue to increase so early identification and intervention remains a priority to drive down costs.
- 4.9 Revisions in commissioning arrangements are necessary to drive down costs of high-cost placements; essential activities include:
 - **Establishing an integrated multi-agency inclusion surgery with quorate representation from the ICB and commissioned services as well as education and social care:** to ensure joint discussion and decision-making for pupils with SEND (EHCP and SEN Support level)
 - **Work to clarify the commissioning of Paediatric Therapy jointly with the ICB across the various contractual arrangements**

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The DBV programme was a £1million grant funded programme operating between April 2024 and March 2025. West Berkshire was one of 52 Local Authorities identified to receive support from the DfE, through this programme, to drive improvements in services and efficiency, to reduce the pressures on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, whilst continuing to meet the needs of the local community through a sustainable programme.
- 5.2 The DBV Programme was incorporated into the overarching SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029, to ensure that the momentum and direction of transformation was sustained over the following years, once the grant programme ceased.

Background

- 5.3 The four task groups of the DBV programme have now been incorporated into the six priority groups of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy.

- 5.4 The SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan 2024-2025 has been reviewed and updated to inform the delivery plan for the year 2025-2026. There are several incomplete actions from the DBV programme which have been carried over into this delivery plan and incorporated into the workflow. These are:
- **The SEND Funding Review:** expected completion date for mainstream July 2025 with implementation in September 2025. For specialist the expected implementation is September 2026.
 - **Development of Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) guidance:** arising out of the funding review, expected completion is July 2025 and is contingent on the outcome of the funding review.
 - **Development of review of decision making:** arising from the funding review with an expected completion of July 2025.
 - **Year 6/7 Transition Support Programme:** extended until December 2025, part-funded by West Berkshire Council.
 - **Mental Health Project in Schools:** extended to July 2025 due to delays in recruitment.
 - **Development of a combined Local Area dashboard:** delayed due to national health data reporting initiatives.
- 5.5 The Governance Structure for SEND has been revised to ensure continued scrutiny of SEND Transformation. The multi-agency SEND Strategic Improvement Board will now be supported by an internal Local Authority SEND Operational Group.

Proposals

- 5.6 Addressing parental confidence in the system remains paramount. It is important that Local Authority systems remain agile and responsive. The use of data to support evidence-based practice and development is now more robust, modelled through DBV initiatives undertaken over the past year. However, there remain very significant risks in the system.
- 5.7 Data gathering has demonstrated that Annual Reviews are not undertaken in a timely way. A significant percentage of EHCPs are not updated within statutory timeframes to reflect progress and changing provision/funding requirements. This impacts on successfully placing children and young people at point of transfer and delays may impact on tribunal rights of parents and carers whilst amendments to EHCPs are agreed. The development of capacity for Annual Reviews is a key priority identified within the SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan and must be recognised as a strategic priority given it is a statutory duty which is not currently being met.
- 5.8 Completed data cleansing activities have improved accuracy in relation to recording placement types, need and other information vital for sufficiency planning. It is important that this is monitored and maintained to ensure continued good practice in this area. Ongoing training and induction for staff will ensure the effective use of Capita ONE to deliver functions and will support productivity in this area.

- 5.9 The use of data to inform evidenced-based practice is imperative to drive performance. Data dashboards already shared at the strategic level could be used regularly to inform team meetings and appraisal targets so there is a collective ownership and understanding of team outcomes. It is imperative to ensure resource to the maintenance and development of the data dashboard continues to ensure accurate, up-to-date insights that inform strategic decision-making and enable effective monitoring of progress against SEND priorities.
- 5.10 Capacity in teams remains an issue as demand on services continues to increase. By streamlining services, through revised structures, and making use of additional technologies, resources can be targeted to support teams.
- 5.11 A revised quality assurance programme in relation to EHCPs is now underway. Annual Reviews will also be part of this programme as it develops. Multi-agency input into this process is vital, at all levels, to ensure that improvements and understanding is expanded across the workforce contributing to EHCNAs.
- 5.12 As an outcome of the SEND Funding Review, decision-making processes will need to be revised to support proposed new systems. These should be transparent, and evidence driven.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 It is important to highlight the proposed next steps to ensure the momentum gained through the DBV programme is not lost. With the programme now concluded, there is a risk that focus on SEND transformation could diminish. Continued strategic commitment is essential to build on the strong foundations laid and to drive forward lasting, meaningful change and financial sustainability.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This report outlines the progress achieved through the DBV programme and sets out clear next steps and priorities to sustain and build upon this progress now that the formal programme has concluded.
- 7.2 The DBV programme has acted as a catalyst for our SEND Transformation, helping to drive forward key areas of improvement with renewed energy and focus.
- 7.3 To maintain this momentum, it is essential that the work continues to be strategically supported and embedded into ongoing service development.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Master Innovation in SEND Delivery Plan

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: N/A

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Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
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Innovation in SEND: SEND & Inclusion Strategy (2024-2029)

DELIVERY PLAN 2025/26

The SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan sets out the key actions which will drive forward our shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Delivery of the plan will be coordinated through five dedicated priority groups, ensuring a collaborative and targeted approach to implementation.

As we move to the next phase of delivery, any outstanding actions from the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme have been incorporated into this delivery plan for April 2025-March 2026.

The plan will be reviewed annually each February, providing an opportunity to assess progress, reflect on emerging priorities and identify new tasks and enablers for the following 12-month period. This ongoing cycle of review and refinement will ensure that we remain responsive to the evolving needs of children, young people and their families.

From April 2025-March 2026, the priority groups will be:

- Priority 1: Early Years
- Priority 2: Early Intervention
- Priority 3: Inclusion
- Priority's 4&5: Developing Local Specialist Provision and Support (including Strengthening Alternative Provision)
- Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood

We have a set of enablers to support the delivery of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy (2024-2029), with some expanded, adjusted, or introduced from those originally published in the strategy, to ensure maintained momentum and effective delivery of actions outlined in this delivery plan.

The Enablers are:

- Maintain, and build upon the progress made with the development of a digital plan and creation of SEND data dashboards. This will enable us to continue to collect, use and share data more effectively. The evolution of the SEND Data Dashboards will provide leaders with continued effective oversight
- Maintain the established governance structure for signing off data that enables accuracy to be checked, priorities to be identified and actions monitored across all partner agencies.
- Routinely share SEND Data with schools (heads, governors and SENDCos) and use this to collectively identify actions that support improvement
- Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future
- Explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Develop a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND
- Review and refresh the Quality Assurance Framework for EHCPs, an example will be provided
- Work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision
- Support the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children & young people and their families
- Enhance the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children and young people
- Ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding:
 - Clawback
 - Banding exercise
 - Use of Element 2
 - Review of HNB spend
- Develop a West Berkshire Schools Accessibility Policy (example provided) that supports delivery of the local area SEND and Inclusion Strategy:
 - The implementation of this policy will be monitored, particularly through the auditing of school's SEN Information Reports to ensure the requirements of the Accessibility Policy are being met contributing to improving accessibility and inclusion for all pupils with SEND and those who are vulnerable
- We will ensure our SEND Local Offer is a dynamic and user-friendly resource that meets the needs of children, young people, their families and professionals. To achieve this, we will focus on the following areas:
 - Continuous Improvement: Regular reviews and feedback will shape ongoing development, keeping the Local Offer relevant, accessible, and reflective of available support.
 - Effective Governance: A clear decision-making structure will be in place to drive improvements, respond to feedback, and ensure the Local Offer evolves in line with local needs and strategic priorities.
 - Accountable Leadership: An accountable officer will oversee the improvements, statutory compliance and co-production with families and stakeholders.

Priority 1: Early Years – Need to include outcome from audit

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
1.1	Ensure the take-up of the Early Years education entitlement; particularly for our most vulnerable families.					
1.1.1	Monitor continued implementation of Communication Strategy and Parent Champion Programme to improve engagement, especially of our most vulnerable families.	March 2026	Interim Head of Early Yeas and Participation & Engagement (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		
1.1.2	Successful implementation of Early Years childcare entitlement expansion across West Berkshire Early Years settings.	Sept 2025	Interim Head of Early Yeas and Participation & Engagement (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EY Take up data 						
1.2	Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this.					
1.2.1	Review referral routes for occupational therapists and paediatricians, ensuring the Local Offer is up to date, effectively links to the BHFT and RBFT websites and that 'One Page Service Offers' (<i>previously plans on a page</i>) are developed, published and reviewed at least annually.	March 2026	Designated Clinical Officer (BOB ICB) / Specialist Information Officer Early Years & Local Offer (WBC) / Kirstie Burrows role TBC (BHFT)	Priority 1 Early Years		March 2025: This piece of work sits within the Therapy Transformation within Berkshire West. At present BHFT and RBFT are working with the ICB to simplify the ways both Paediatricians and Occupational Therapists are accessed. This action has therefore moved into this delivery plan until any changes have been embedded into practice. A timescale and action plan have been requested from the ICB, but the ICB do not have a date of when this work will be concluded, although BHFT and RBFT have been asked to expedite this work. This is currently on hold due to two-week JTAI being undertaken in Reading.
1.2.2	Explore the permanent increase to the capacity of the Early Development and Inclusion Team (EDIT) to enable them to respond to the concerns of Early Years Settings for both referred and non-referred children.	May 2025	Learning Support Services Manager / EDIT Coordinator (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		March 2025: Temporary increase in hours still to be approved via Schools Forum. Schools Forum 10/03 was cancelled therefore there is a delay and uncertainty for EDIT colleagues. Previously discussed there may not be the available funding to increase EDIT hours permanently. This would need to go via Schools Forum for a decision but are exploring whether there is any scope for this to move into the Early Years space.
1.2.3	Maintain the uptake of Health Visitor two-year checks at 85% or higher, ensuring early identification of need. Offer 3.5-year checks to families	March 2026	Acting Senior Public Health Programme Officer (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		

	who missed their two-year review and monitor take-up (recognising participation is voluntary).					
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of children whose needs are identified at pre-school. • Health visitor 2-year check take up data. • Health Visitor 3.5-year check take up data. • EDIT Impact Report. 						
1.3	Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5.					
1.3.1	Develop clear guidance for Early Years settings on what should be ordinarily available for children with SEND.	August 2025	Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement / SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		March 2025 - Coproduction is underway.
1.3.2	Implement and monitor the impact of the revised Early Years training and support offer.	March 2026	Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement / Early Years Service	Priority 1 Early Years		
1.3.3	Early Response Hub action	TBC	Team Manager Contact Advice & Assessment Service (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		March 2025: There is currently a period of significant change/consultation and development within the Early Help space together with Family Hubs. Following this alignment, an action will be provided. It was agreed this was the best approach to take to ensure there was no duplication.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take up of Early Years Inclusion Fund. • Take up of Early Years Training Offer by settings. • Early Years Training Impact Report 						
1.4	Ensure our schools and practitioners are well prepared for meeting the needs of our children transitioning from the Early Years to school, with the right systems and processes in place, including effective collaboration between settings/practitioners.					
1.4.1	Implement the transitions best practice guidance via ongoing Early Years training and support, ensuring effective delivery of guidance, resources, and strategies to support smooth transitions.	December 2025	Early Years / EDIT / SEND team	Priority 1 Early Years		


1.4.2	Review funding mechanisms for children under five with SEND in pre-school settings and maintained nursery and primary schools to ensure children have continuity of support on transition.	August 2025	SEND Re-banding Review Lead / Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement / SEND Team (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		March 2025 – This work is partially completed and is being picked up within Phase 2 of the banding review work with an anticipated completion date of August 2025.
1.4.3	Continued implementation of universal and targeted measures to address school readiness, with measurable outcomes reviewed annually to assess impact and effectiveness.	March 2026	Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement /Early Years Service (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		
1.4.4	Early Response Hub (Schools Panel)	TBC	Team Manager Contact Advice & Assessment Service (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		March 2025 - There is currently a period of significant change/consultation and development within the Early Help space together with Family Hubs. Following this alignment, an action will be provided. It was agreed this was the best approach to take to ensure there was no duplication.
1.4.5	Review numbers of children that require enhanced support in order to be successful in Mainstream School to ensure needs are being met and that they are able to stay in mainstream if it's appropriate. Use this data to review how needs should be met going forward.	December 2025	EDIT Coordinator / Learning Support Services Manager / SEMH Service / EYFS Improvement Adviser (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		

Measures of success (how will we know?)


- Packages of support in place for children transitioning into primary schools.
- Numbers of statutory requests at Early Years/ Reception/ Yr1.

Priority 2: Early Intervention

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
2.1	Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early.					
2.1.1	Investigate how to develop an accredited training course for TA's and write a proposal.	Longer term: 2025-2026	Learning Support Services Manager (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Discussed in Early Intervention priority meeting. Discussed how some of our most vulnerable children in the most need of inclusion, can sometimes be supported by the least trained. Decided it would be best to do some research first around what accredited training programmes are already available and what cost this would entail. This would then be presented to Headteacher's as there would be a cost associated to schools to 'buy in'. Also need to consider the health element, so ensuring the right people are involved. The CALT team would be heavily involved in developing this and they are currently involved in the Dyslexia Friendly Guidelines Award.
2.1.2	If development of accredited training	Longer term:	Learning Support	Priority 2 -		April 2025: See above for full update. If following research, this is deemed feasible, the content of

	course for TA's is deemed feasible and cost-effective, design and produce the course content.	2026-2027	Services Manager (WBC)	Early Intervention		the training will be designed and implemented, ensuring all the relevant colleagues are involved.
2.1.3	Ensure all advice writers and SEND Services access the Levels 1 and 2 Council for Disabled Children (CDC) online training, and where appropriate the service specific advice writing online training. Embed this training within induction programmes and appraisal processes to ensure ongoing professional development. Consider a multi-agency workshop with the CDC to support this.	March 2026	All Line Managers/ Service Leads across services (WBC / BOB ICB / BHFT / RBH)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Action is arising out of the SEND Funding Review. Discussed in Early Intervention Priority meeting. There has been a request for more information around the training and the time commitment involved to understand who in each service needs to complete this. It was agreed that as a system we need to do some work on how we write advice and how this is translated into an EHCP. Draft plans are in some cases (CYPIT for example) checked to ensure information has been translated how it was intended. The SEND Strategy Officer will pick up the concerns with the SEND Re-Banding Review Lead and DMT.
2.1.4	Review the results of the pilot of SPENCER 3D (an identification tool for schools), measure impact in evaluation phase and roll out more widely if there is evidence of effectiveness	March 2026	Clinical Director – Children, Families and All-Age Services Division (BHFT) / Strategic Transformation Lead for Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing and Berkshire Neurodiverse Preventative System Programme Lead (BFFC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		<p>April 2025: There is a Berkshire wide piece of work being led by Andrea King at Brighter Futures for Children. All DCS' have signed up to this, and it is in the early stages. This work is looking at a 'profiling' tool (the word profiling will not be used in the future).</p> <p>May 2025: There is a meeting scheduled for 27th June 2025 where SPENCER 3D and the leaders of the Portsmouth model will be joining Berkshire System Leaders to talk through the models which will inform the decision on the preferred model for the whole of Berkshire.</p> <p><u>Berkshire Neuro Strategic Transformation Summary</u></p>  <p>2.1.4 Berkshire Neuro strategic transformati</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training offer take up. • Survey on practitioners confidence in meeting SEND needs. • Requests for therapy assessments data. • Reduction in requests for EHC Needs Assessments with needs being met at an earlier stage. • Increase in the number of SPENCER 3D profiles being completed allowing for analysis of pilot and a decision as to whether to roll out more widely. • Increased quality of EHCPs using Invision360. 						
2.2	Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support					
2.2.1	Improve awareness and take up of early help services	TBC	Team Manager Contact Advice & Assessment Service (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Formal Early Help Consultation has started. Survey closes at end of May, with results available end of June 2025. This is a really exciting time for the feedback to be used to essentially build a service that our families want. No formal action for this delivery plan can be provided until finalisation of this coproduction piece as we do not want to anticipate what the outcome of this will be.
2.2.2	Review One Page Service Offer (previously referred to as Plans on a Page) annually, or when there is a	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer / Head of SEND /	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Previously known 'plans on a page' are published on the Local Offer. Work is ongoing to ensure these are hosted on both parent and professional areas, rather than sitting within the FAQ section of the Local Offer.

	significant change, ensuring revised service offers are well communicated and publicised on the Local Offer. New service offers to be completed for new services.		Specialist Info Officer EYs & Local Offer (WBC)			
2.2.3	Ensure existing SEN support teams work in a more coordinated way and provide a single point of referral/ access.	TBC	TBC	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Update provided in Priority 2 meeting. Single point of access for SEMH services remains ongoing. This will include all SEMH services and possibly also the Autism Team. There are ongoing discussions as to whether it is appropriate for the Autism Team or not. We are looking at introducing a triage system who will decide which team is best to provide the support. This is also linked to early support funding. Currently, a lot of the teams have different pots of funding, which can become hard to manage.
2.2.4	Arising out of the SEND thematic review, review and evaluate the impact of the current level of support services from the Emotional Mental Health Academy accessed through Early Help. ensuring that services are identifying and meeting needs of children requiring additional support at Early Help in relation to mental health and improving the outcomes.	March 2026	Team Manager Contact Advice & Assessment Service (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Update provided in Priority 2 meeting. Services that are being offered at Level 2 are not currently being changed as we do not want to anticipate the outcome of the Early Help consultation. It is however anticipated that something which will come out of the consultation will be around children and young people's well-being and mental health. We think there will be big changes following this consultation and there is also a focus on Early Help from the Government. We have received the new prevention children's services grant. We want to use this grant in the right way by listening to everyone's feedback and using this in our service design.
2.2.5	Collaborate with Public Health and the Health & Wellbeing Board to gather and share insights, including relevant data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This information will support the early identification of emerging needs and assist in the commissioning of support & provision, ensuring it is aligned with local health and wellbeing priorities.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / Service Lead – Consultant in Public Health / Head of SEND / Service Director – Education & SEND (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: A discussion was had in the Early Intervention priority group around the group deciding what they would like to get from the JSNA and that it can be what we want it to be e.g. a full assessment of need. It was decided it might be helpful for the new data analyst to share a presentation on the wider needs assessment – they will attend the next meeting (2 nd June 2025) to share this. It was also discussed that we need to ensure we are looking at what data is available in other Council departments to bring together a broader picture.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take up of Early Help Services • Hits on Early Help Local Offer • Reduced education placement breakdown, reduced exclusions/ suspensions, increased attendance • Survey on practitioners' confidence in meeting SEND needs • No of schools accessing additional support service 						
2.3	Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early.					
2.3.1	Implement a whole School Mental Health Project, delivered through the Education Psychology team, to be expanded and offered to all schools in West Berkshire, to be evaluated after one year.	September 2025	Virtual School Headteacher (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Currently looking at what Phase 2 of the whole school mental health project will look like. There is no DBV funding available going forward so we are looking at other streams of funding to support on a one-off basis. There is a strong desire for a Phase two. Not just from schools that are currently taking part, but also because of the ongoing networking. There is a particular interest from secondary schools, which is really positive as we only had two secondary schools sign up to phase one.
2.3.2	Provide a supervision offer to schools to give staff a safe and reflective space to discuss	March 2026	Virtual School Headteacher (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: See update to action 2.3.2 regarding securing funding.

	operations and interventions. The supervision offer will support school leaders to put theory into practice and mitigate the risk of secondary trauma and burnout. This will begin with a trial with Headteachers, and project leads in the pilot schools.					
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluations of impact of training delivered for workshops Staff confidence in applying learnt strategies within the classroom and how well-supported staff feel by SLT (before/after) Exclusions – qualitative feedback on how situations may have been managed differently since the training Alongside exclusions – reduction in number of incidents escalated to SLT Confidence in our project leaders of changing their ways of working - how confident do they feel applying knowledge Info on how beneficial school leaders feel the additional support for them has been 						
2.4	Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity.					
2.4.1	Raise awareness amongst parents and practitioners of ordinarily available services for neurodiverse children which can be accessed without a diagnosis. Monitor the impact by tracking access to, and engagement with, these services. Involve the Parent/Carer Forum and Parent Champions in shaping and sharing information to enhance reach and trust.	March 2026	Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) / Designated Clinical Officer (BOB ICB)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: The Priority 2 group heard that the Service Manager – YJS has been having conversations with a company called Beebot AI. A lot of Local Authorities have done some collaboration with them around a digital self-service offer for families. This has the ability to redirect families away from the front door for those really low level universal needs. <u>Beebot AI</u>  2.4.1 Children's Services Digital Business
2.4.2	Work with colleagues in the health system to review access criteria for the Autism service, to explore increasing capacity to meet demand for earlier intervention through a revised service offer. Recent changes to the ND pathway will be taken into consideration during this work.	March 2026	Learning Support Services Manager (WBC) / Designated Clinical Officer (BOB ICB)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: The Priority 2 group heard that health are attending the SENCO Update meeting on 4 th June to share about the changes made to the Neurodiversity pathway which were launched in October 2024. It was felt that until these changes were fully understood, the service offer cannot be reviewed. There was concern raised around the capacity of the Autism Team with criteria previously 'capped' at those children and young people with a diagnosis due to the numbers requiring the Autism Team's support. It was shared that it would be important, when we have a Head of SEND in post, that they can support in looking at this and providing support around funding etc.
2.4.3	Investigate rates of diagnosis and diagnostic pathways for ASD with health colleagues against the census and primary need data. Agree any actions required as a result of the review and by the review of the new Autism Pathway Pilot and screening.	March 2026	Learning Support Services Manager (WBC) / Designated Clinical Officer (BOB ICB)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: The Priority 2 group heard that the presentation at the SENCO Update meeting on 4 th June 2025 will provide some clarity around diagnostic pathways. The Autism Team know the numbers of those who are diagnosed who come into the Autism Team for support, but more work would need to be done with health to gather a full picture. Primary Need and Census data can be gathered from the Business Manager for SEND and the Performance, Research & Consult Analyst.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased take up of pre-diagnosis offer Improved waiting times from referral to treatment for children aged 8+ and under 8. 						

Priority 3: Inclusion						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
3.1	Increase the capability of our local schools to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in a mainstream setting.					
3.1.1	Maintaining review of schools that may have capacity for additional provisions over the next academic year	March 2026	Education Place Planning & Development Manager / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		May 2025: Being reviewed as part of work taking place in Priority 4 of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy and increasing local specialist placement capacity.
3.1.2	Developing and sharing a best practice guide to support schools and settings on the most effective use of funding Element 2. Review the use of element 2 to promote targeted intervention at SEN support through early identification of need and timely access to appropriate resources.	April 2025	SEND Re-banding Review Lead / Service Director – Education & SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		April 2025: The SEND Strategy Officer to request an update from the SEND Re-banding Review Lead.
3.1.3	Refresh OAP Guidance and link it to the process and application request format for EHC Assessment requests.	August 2025	SEND Re-banding Review Lead	Priority 3 - Inclusion		April 2025: The SEND Strategy Officer to request an update from the SEND Re-banding Review Lead.
3.1.4	Develop clear guidance to support admissions into specialist provisions in mainstream schools and special schools in West Berkshire to clarify how specialist provision fits into the graduated approach to support and when a specialist provision might be appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance from Phase 2 of funding (banding review) to inform admissions to specialist provisions 	August 2025	SEND Strategy Officer / SEND Re-banding Review Lead / Learning Support Services Manager / Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		April 2025: The SEND Strategy Officer to request an update from the SEND Re-banding Review Lead.
3.1.5	Record secondary and other needs for pupils with SEND and that the correct primary need is recorded – linked to the data quality and Annual Review process	March 2026	Interim Principal SEN Manager	Priority 3 - Inclusion		April 2025: Previous Principal SEN Manager explained that it would take some time for all SEN needs to be updated in Capita ONE, due to needing to wait for an Annual Review to have taken place. The SEN team continue to have monthly data cleanse days. We are confident the data we are starting to see coming through is more accurate than previously. The Internal Data Task Group is discussing SCAP forecasts and it is hoped the next time this data is ‘run’ we will see a more accurate picture of types of SEND needs given the data cleansing work but also the developments that have been undertaken to the Capita ONE system; ensuring old ‘codes’ have been decommissioned.
3.1.6	Carry out a detailed analysis on the			Priority 3 -		March 2025: Work around the thematic review/visit focussed on children not in school, where



	profile of children and young people identified as Electively Home Educated (EHE) or on individual packages and identify any actions required to improve the experience of children and young people in these categories.			Inclusion		Elective Home Education was a key element. Learning from the review will inform work in this area moving forward, including looking at the sharing of information when Social Care is not involved with a child/family and access to services when a child/young person is not in school. The SEND Strategy Officer will attend DMT to discuss this action and how any future expansion of this action may need to look in this delivery plan.
3.1.7	Stephanie to put together wording around early response hub SEND data		Team Manager Contact Advice & Assessment Service (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		April 2025: Formal Early Help Consultation has started. Survey closes at end of May, with results available end of June 2025. This is a really exciting time for the feedback to be used to essentially build a service that our families want. No formal action for this delivery plan can be provided until finalisation of this coproduction piece as we do not want to anticipate what the outcome of this will be.
3.1.8	Enhance secondary schools' confidence in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, by providing targeted training, guidance and opportunities for partnership working, ensuring a more inclusive approach to admissions and provision.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Principal Adviser for School Improvement (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		March 2025: This action has been added to the delivery plan due to concerns raised by LA colleagues around school's ethos around inclusion, responding to consultations stating they cannot meet needs and not consistently making reasonable adjustments e.g. use of sensory aids. This action ties into the below action around Annual Reviews. April 2025: Discussed in the Priority 3 group that the children and young people coming through are displaying more complex needs and there is a real issue with schools being able to recruit.
3.1.9	Review and strengthen capacity within the SEND Service to ensure Annual Reviews are completed in line with statutory requirements.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Service Director – Education & SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		March 2025: Annual Reviews have been highlighted as a risk on the risk register. There is a particular concern around schools responding to consultations stating they cannot meet need, when this may be able to be avoided if EHCPs had been amended in a timely manner. April 2025: Discussed in the Priority 3 group as a high priority. It was shared that there is a case that is currently going through tribunal, seemingly unnecessarily, due to a school saying they can meet need on consultation based on outdated paperwork, when the placement is inappropriate. There was also concern raised of delays in responding to Annual Reviews delays parents right of appeal. The SEND Strategy Officer to pick up with the Interim Principal SEN Manager around plans for capacity to support with Annual Reviews.
3.1.10	Develop and enhance data collection in the Capita ONE system around Annual Reviews. This may include amending the Annual Review involvement to allow for the recording of additional data relating to Annual Reviews. This will improve tracking of Annual Review completion and enable more effective monitoring through the SEND data dashboard.	December 2025	Interim Principal SEN Manager / Principal Systems Support Officer	Priority 3 - Inclusion		May 2025: The Interim Principal SEN Manager is working closely with the systems team to develop the Capita ONE system. There is a strategic review of the Capita ONE system to ensure all purchased modules are being utilised. This was originally scheduled for January but was moved to May due to OFSTED and then moved back to July by Capita. This will be added to the risk register. The Annual Review data has previously 'fallen off' the data dashboard. The team are new to using PowerBI and are working really hard to maintain and develop the dashboard. This will be added to the risk register. This action is also contingent on having the capacity within the SEND Team to respond to Annual Reviews
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in no. of inclusion spaces/ resource bases, including in planning stage • Reduction in number of statutory assessment requests from schools • Fewer requests for statutory assessments in Early Years and KS1 • Schools confidence in ability to meet needs at Element 2 (SURVEY) 						
3.2	Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND.					
3.2.1	Develop a Delivery Plan to support schools in reducing the number of fixed term and permanent	March 2026	Head of SEND / Principal EP & Service Manager	Priority 3 - Inclusion		March 2025: Initial delivery of this action had been delayed due to there being no Service Manager for SEMH in post. A first draft delivery plan has been produced and is in the consultation phase. It is anticipated the finalised delivery plan will be implemented in March 2025, but does need to be

	exclusions of children and young people with SEND. Keep delivery plan under review to monitor impact. Intelligence could be used from the secondary pastoral collaborative group		SEMH / Team Manager Exclusions (WBC)			<p>looked at alongside an Alternative Provision Strategy. The embedded delivery plan remains incomplete as further developments are required.</p> <p>April 2025: No further updates since March. It is important to have a Head of SEND in post to input into this.</p>
3.2.2	Review communication and information sharing processes across teams within education, and more broadly, to ensure information is shared at the earliest opportunity.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Delivery of this action was delayed due to there being no Service Manager for SEMH in post. A review of the Capita ONE system is underway as well as work on aligning services (Emotional Health Academy, Therapeutic Thinking Support Team, Medical Tuition Service, Autism Advisory Service) via a common referral pathway and triage system. This work is still in development. The use of three potential data management systems (Capita ONE, Mosaic and IAPTUS) could still create data sharing issues moving forward and will need to be mitigated.</p> <p>April 2025: There is concern that the strategic review of the Capita ONE system keeps getting pushed back, this is key to ensuring information sharing across professionals. There is work underway to align services in terms of the referral process (see priority 2 for a full update)</p>
3.2.3	Develop a sharing of best practice guide to support schools in effectively implementing the therapeutic approaches training they have received.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: There is a successful and well attended Therapeutic Network currently in place and is run by the lead for Therapeutic Approaches. We currently have a training and development lead who will take this forward. There is a requirement to understand if a best practice guide is the most appropriate action. We also need to link with the AATIMH Project to understand the full range of current available training and build on the current therapeutic network.</p>
3.2.4	Monitor the implementation of the amalgamated grant allocation process, ensuring it aligns with service support and provision requirements established through the joint triage system. Track outcomes and impact as part of an iterative approach to service delivery, using findings to inform ongoing improvements.	March 2026	SEND Re-banding Review Lead / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Alongside the alignment of services grants will be amalgamated and allocated against service support and provision requirements established via a joint triage system. Monitoring of outcomes/impact will form part of an iterative approach to service delivery.</p> <p>April 2025: See update to action 2.2.3. Looking at introducing early support funding which amalgamates all funding currently accessed by schools. This would result in a single funding approach and a single triage for referral.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in exclusion rates (fixed-term and permanent) • Attendance rates: Improvement in overall school attendance • Student engagement and wellbeing measures: High levels of student satisfaction and engagement (school's own measures) • Increase in number of behaviour policies which reflect the therapeutic, relational and trauma informed approach • Changes to the referral rates to, and outcomes from, support services 						
3.3	Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education.					
3.3.1	Measure the impact of the year 6 to year 7 transition support programme, ensuring its continued delivery and assessing whether any changes are needed to enhance support for students.	March 2026	Learning Support Services Manager / Team Manager Exclusions / Head of SEND	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>April 2025: The programme is progressing with visits having been made to every school who is involved in the programme. It would have been ideal to have started the programme in September as it has taken some time to get the permission slips back. Schools will be revisited to monitor completion of checklist and there will be a plan in place for each child participating in the project.</p>
3.3.2	Ensure a clear communication plan	March 2026	Head of SEND /	Priority 3 -		<p>April 2025: This has been shared with schools in the form of a booklet and some briefing sessions</p>

	for transition guidance is in place and work towards embedding earlier transition planning for children and young people with SEND (EHCP & SEN Support). This will be done by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a structured plan to share transition guidance with Headteachers each autumn, setting clear expectations and timelines. Work towards transition planning beginning in Year 5. 		Learning Support Services Manager / Team Manager Exclusions (WBC)	Inclusion		were held before Christmas. Schools have had lots of opportunity to discuss it and it was completed in conjunction with a variety of different parties.
3.3.3	Create a West Berkshire Relational Inclusion Policy for Education. The strategy will encompass other work strands e.g. transition and fair access and will set a standard for inclusion which will benefit all young people and learning communities in West Berkshire.	March 2026	Virtual School Headteacher (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		April 2025: There was a relational policy workshop day back in March, as a result, we have been able to co-produce with our participating schools what we think a policy framework would look like. Once it is all signed off and ratified, schools will be able to adopt and adapt it as they see fit. It is 95% written. It sort of sits on top of other policies e.g. behaviour policies. One clear golden thread through the new OFSTED framework is the feeling of belonging and this sets out what schools need to be doing to ensure children and young people feel like they belong and feel secure in school. It includes things like the therapeutic thinking team interventions. The policy framework will be shared once it has been signed off. As a project (mental health project), we are looking at securing funding on public health grounds instead to secure funding for Phase two. We have put a proposal together for public health funding, which will be submitted by the end of May. Alongside this, we are also getting expressions of interest from schools to support the public health initiative. If we have buy in from another 10 schools, it is worth investing in.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions. No. of children with an EHCP in a phased transfer year group remaining in mainstream including reduction in requests for specialist placements at transitions points No of children on SEN Support in a phased transfer year group transferring without recourse to an EHC assessment request. Reduction in placements at AP and INMSS made at secondary transition 						
3.4	Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings.					
3.4.1	Review and develop special school outreach service, with identified funding and revised Service Level Agreement.	March 2026	Learning Support Services Manager / Service Director Education & SEND	Priority 3 - Inclusion		March 2025: In discussions with the Service Director for Education & SEND, it was agreed that this action was not able to be progressed during the duration of the previous delivery plan and has therefore continued into this delivery plan.
3.4.2	Review and develop Pupil Referral Unit outreach service, with identified funding and revised Service Level Agreement.	September 2026	Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH	Priority 3 - Inclusion		March 2025: The PEP is in the process of developing an SLA with iCollege, within which the outreach service will be included. The OFSTED Thematic Review indicated confidence in the iCollege offer more generally.
3.4.3	Stephanie to write wording around Early Response Hub outreach		Team Manager Contact Advice & Assessment Service (WBC)			March 2025: There is currently a period of significant change/consultation and development within the Early Help space together with Family Hubs. Following this alignment, an action will be provided. It was agreed this was the best approach to take to ensure there was no duplication. April 2025: See update to action 3.1.7
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of schools accessing outreach support. 						

- Satisfaction with SISS (SURVEY)
- Satisfaction with PRU outreach service (SURVEY)
- Reduction in suspensions/ exclusions and increased attendance.

3.5	Support our Local Schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision.					
3.5.1	Establish a community of practice group to gain an understanding of how children and young people with EBSA are being supported locally and to disseminate good practice, ensuring there is a shared understanding across the local area.	March 2026	Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH / Head of SEND	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: SENCO Conference in 2025 will focus on EBSA. Currently, only a small number of tickets have been sold and the event will not break even if there isn't more interest. It is hoped the conference will provide new ideas and perspectives. The Task Group felt that they could act as the Community of Practice Group, provided there was the right representation. This was further discussed in the Task Group held on 05/03 where the group defined the purpose of having a Community of Practice Group including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing best practice and strategies across schools and services • Providing clear definitions of EBSA and distinguishing it from broader mental health or SEND issues • Encouraging multi-agency collaboration, particularly with social care and health services • Raising awareness of available local support and] • Ensuring all agencies work towards a unified approach to supporting students <p>There is currently no EP in post with the capacity or special interest in EBSA. The EBSA team are currently receiving some additional support from the Emotional Health Academy.</p> <p>The Principal EP/Service Manager for SEMH is chairing the EBSA task group and will be taking this forward as a Community of Practice was fully defined.</p> <p>April 2025: A group of Primary Schools are looking at the training element which may inform the community of practice; combined with parent community and how we support them.</p>
3.5.2	Develop a programme of learning for our schools to ensure our workforce is confident in supporting children and young people with EBSA.	March 2026	Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH / Head of SEND	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Funded training will be offered to schools as a pilot (small group of schools) for the whole school and families. Schools have been asked to submit a expression of interest. Training Link: https://www.edpsyched.co.uk/ebsa-horizons-schools</p> <p>April 2025: 8 Primary Schools want to join the pilot there are a number of meetings across the year to be organised to support schools and monitor how the training is going. It is 12 hours of training accessible for the year and all online. It is tiered training e.g. office staff 45 mins. It is appropriate for role level within the school. It is whole school training, with all staff to be trained. Schools also have a family license to give access to resources for families.</p> <p>Secondary schools were offered the training too. We are hopeful two secondary schools will join the pilot. We are looking at purchasing as a pilot pack which will be offered at a discounted price for secondary schools. We are still to define which secondary schools will be joining the pilot. Having secondary schools on board will support next steps with working with secondary schools around EBSA.</p>
3.5.3	Explore increasing capacity within the EBSA service to meet demand for earlier intervention.	March 2026	Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH / Head of SEND	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Schools have been surveyed around their experience of all SEMH services. There will be continuing work to measure service impact going forward. Many secondary schools were unsure whether they could access EBSA support, and OFSTED flagged this as an issue in the Thematic Review. There is an additional action within the delivery plan for 2025-2026 to explore secondary access to EBSA support to address this grow in demand.</p> <p>There are an increasing number of high-complexity cases, which EBSA services may not be able to fully support. There are lots of teams within West Berkshire Council who will be working with EBSA</p>

						<p>children and young people, so there is a requirement to understand how we might be able to use Capita ONE to record this information. Coding of Part-time Timetables might give us a better idea of numbers of children and young people experiencing EBSA.</p> <p>Schools have provided feedback that there is an overlap of support services, but that there is not joined up working – this will be looked at as part of the SEMH services review.</p> <p>Still working on increasing EP capacity across the board. EP element incorporated into funding.</p>
3.5.4	<p>Review, and re-launch, our EBSA guidance. To achieve this, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop updated guidance for schools • Create accessible guidance for parent/carers – this could be in the form of a parent/carer booklet • Ensure all resources are available on the Local Offer for easy access 	March 2026	Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH / Head of SEND / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Currently there is ongoing development work to create a page on EBSA for the Local Offer. The EBSA Task Group held on 05/03 agreed that the guidance would need to be updated after the EBSA Horizons training has been implemented, as this will inform best practices going forward. It was suggested that schools who undergo the training could be involved in shaping the revised guidance going forward.</p> <p>April 2025: Although guidance is dated 2020, does incorporate what is happening locally to support young people with EBSA. Is important to review regularly and would like to incorporate information from the training. Guidance refresh to be coproduced and include language which is useful. Latest research, webinars etc. will need to be incorporated into refresh.</p>
3.5.5	Develop Secondary School access to support children presenting with EBSA to address a grow in demand	March 2026	Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH / Head of SEND	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>April 2025: Initially we need to understand from schools what interventions look like from a school perspective, including data and determine if there is another approach for secondary schools which needs to be explored.</p> <p>We need to ensure secondary school representation on the EBSA task Group. Some work had previously been done around secondary school support for EBSA, which the SEND Strategy Officer will investigate.</p>
3.5.6	Identify children who experience persistent difficulty attending school; working with partners including Health to ensure timely sharing of information to improve outcomes of these children.	March 2026	Head of SEND (WBC) / Principal EWO & Lead Officer for Safeguarding (WBC) / Designated Clinical Officer (BOB ICB) / Social Care (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>April 2025: We need a better understanding of who the children are and where they are. Feeding back through both primary and secondary schools. Overlap of how children are being supported. In SEMH services, developing a single referral form which may support with data gathering i.e. a way of identifying EBSA at earlier levels.</p> <p><u>EBSA Advisory Report & Data</u></p> <div>  <p>3.5.6.1 EBSA Advisory Team report 2023_20</p> </div> <div>  <p>3.5.6.2 EBSA Advisory Team 2024-25 (to 25</p> </div>

Measures of success (how will we know?)

- Reduction in number of pupils absent from school due to EBSA.

Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision & Support

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025-	RAG Status*	Commentary
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				31 March 2026		
4.1	Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally.					
4.1.1	Understand better the needs of the current and future cohorts of children with SEND to ensure the availability of the type of education provisions required to meet need, refreshing the SEND Sufficiency Plan annually and publishing by September each year.	September 2025	Head of SEND / SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP): Sufficiency Strategy Task and Finish Group		April 2025: The first sufficiency task and finish group was held on 24/04. It was agreed that this group was likely a duplication of the internal data task group, so this group has been paused for now. Governance remains around SEND Sufficiency, with a group meeting on 30 th May 2025.
4.1.2	Undertake a banding review of unit costs of mainstream, maintained special and alternative provision to ensure parity and alignment with local and national funding arrangements	August 2025	SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p><u>Fair and Transparent Funding Model – Mainstream Schools</u></p> <p>March 2025 The Working Group has met monthly from November and is due to meet again on 10th February. Helen has amended the preferred LA example framework to reflect West Berks context and in line with feedback. The working group has tested some EHCPs from the representative schools against these. Some further suggested amendments have been made. Group is reviewing the draft mainstream school SEND Funding Guidance and providing feedback. Helen has met with DCO to support health engagement. SEND school mapping data requested is developing well and will be shared with group in Feb and March meetings. Agreed Helen will lead OAP Working Group. Members of current funding working group can become involved in the OAP working group. An Early Support Funding Framework has been drafted for consideration by the group. Going forward the following work is still to be completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further amend draft Framework to reflect feedback to date and West Berks needs. • Meeting with EHCP team to engage with them and get their feedback and suggestions. • Test with larger sample of EHCPs (Feb / March) • Amend Mainstream School SEND Funding Guide to reflect feedback to date. • Meeting with secondary SEND leads 10th Feb and SENDCo network (5th March) to get feedback and suggestions. • Engage with broader health partners (Helen) • Develop Early Support Funding model / framework for development Feb / March <p>There are concerns with regards to the capacity of services to be actively involved in the work. Services are doing their best to attend and be involved.</p> <p><u>Fair and Transparent Funding Model – Specialist Schools and specialist provisions in mainstream</u></p> <p>March 2025 Draft descriptors Have been put together for SEMH provisions (ICollege EHCPs and Castle @ Theale) and for Brookfields and Castle. These were tested on 27th January in moderation sessions with special schools. The feedback was that with some minor amendments the descriptors clearly described children and young people in their cohorts and there was consistency of judgement across schools and within schools. Planned activity going forward includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helen is making the proposed amendments. The schools are allocating an indicative descriptor for all their pupils against the framework. An all-day moderation session (SEMH in

						<p>the morning and Brookfields and The Castle in the afternoon) will take place on 10th March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helen to make contact with finance team to ensure they are ready for financial modelling actions. <p>Some risks have been identified including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion held on current cohorts and particularly pupils who should be able to have their needs met in a specialist provision in a mainstream school or a mainstream school. This impacts on the staffing structures and the breadth of curriculum in a special school / AP setting. The impact is that there are not sufficient places available for those children and young people who really need a special school setting and so they are in mainstream schools. This then impacts on mainstream schools. iCollege also needs this clarity regarding placement of pupils with an EHCP and process for this. <p>Suggested mitigations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This work needs to lead to clear guidance to support admissions into special school / specialist provision placements. Some other LAs also have videos to support clarity for parents / carers and mainstream schools. The special schools welcome this. This action is in the delivery plan. For iCollege this should be picked up in the discussions with them to develop an SLA.
4.1.3	Review and updating of Strategic and Operational commissioning and procurement practices in relation to placement and Alternative Provision - including brokerage and contract management	December 2025	Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>March 2025: A review has been completed with the outcome of the review being to re-design and re-resource commissioning arrangements across Children's Services to ensure appropriate cost-effective provision is available locally and that contracts are monitored more closely to ensure value for money.</p> <p>April 2025: The commissioning team roles have been approved by FRP on a two year fixed term basis initially and are out advertisement.</p>
4.1.4	Consider bringing the commissioning functions together for SEND to support a shared and accurate picture of local need informed by joint data sets developed through the SEND Dashboard that further informs commissioning and monitoring of impact of services as well as opportunities for joint commissioning.	December 2025	Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>April 2025: The commissioning team roles have been approved by FRP on a two year fixed term basis initially and are out advertisement.</p>
4.1.5	Review decision making processes to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Decision making processes to be updated, where necessary, on the Local Offer.	September 2025	SEND Re-banding Review Lead / Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>March 2025: A review of decision-making processes was completed in August 2024 and a report was shared with DMT. This work is now dependent on the outcome of the SEND Banding Review</p>
4.1.6	Link the work being undertaken to analyse independent and non-maintained specialist placements with the Banding Review work: Need to understand the data in terms of the Phase 2 banding review working group	August – September 2025	SEND Re-banding Review Lead / Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		
4.1.7	Work in partnership with the Parent//Carer Forum to ensure that	March 2026	Head of SEND / SEND Strategy	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing		

	the experiences and insights of parents and carers are central to co-production and identifying the current and future needs of children and young people with SEND. This will involve regular discussions, feedback opportunities and joint planning to develop services that are closely aligned with the needs of local families.		Officer / Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum	Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		
4.1.8	<p>Develop, and publish, a clear and accessible Continuum of Provision guide on the Local Offer. This guide will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support parents/carers in understanding the range of SEND Provision available across West Berkshire, including types of settings, how placement panel's operate and how & when school visits can be arranged. Improve families' confidence and clarity when considering educational options, leading to more informed and timely decisions around school placements. Be reviewed annually. 	September 2025	Head of SEND / Interim Principal SEN Manager / Learning Support Services Manager / DBV Programme Coordinator	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: New action added April 2025. A discussion was had about ensuring that there is consistency and clear information for parents/carers, in one place, to support them when providing their school preference(s) for their child with an EHCP. Feedback from parents has been that they don't know how to choose or school, or what is available. It was agreed that the first steps of this action would be to research what information is currently available on the Local Offer and understand from parents how this information could be presented to be most useful to them, given concerns around duplication of information and required resources to keep such a continuum of provision document up to date.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of unit costs with statistical neighbours and national benchmarking Reduction in requests for EHC Needs Assessments. Clear and transparent decision-making processes published on the Local Offer. Reduction in unit costs for placements in IMNS and AP. Reduction in price increase in current high-cost placements in IMNS and AP. Increase in sustainable AP provision. % of children placed in good, or outstanding provision 						
4.2	Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision.					
4.2.1	Develop a district wide plan for expanding specialist resource provision, or units, in mainstream settings. This will be informed by the sufficiency plan data and emerging patterns of need, with a focus on ensuring there is a continuum of provision across all phases.	September 2025	Head of SEND / Education Place Planning & Development Manager / Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects / SEND Strategy Officer	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		May 2025: Proposed new action developed in response to feedback requesting a reduction in duplicated actions, with a focus on broader, data-led priorities aligned with sufficiency plan, rather than overly specific tasks. Action to be agreed by Priority 4/5 in June 2025.

			(WBC)			
4.2.2	Engage with schools, and other stakeholders, to explore and co-produce models of inclusive provision that respond to identified gaps.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Education Place Planning & Development Manager / Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		May 2025: Proposed new action developed in response to feedback requesting a reduction in duplicated actions, with a focus on broader, data-led priorities aligned with sufficiency plan, rather than overly specific tasks. Action to be agreed by Priority 4/5 in June 2025.
4.2.1	Develop a 12-place provision in the west of the Authority for primary age children with Autism / SEMH (an equivalent provision to Kennet Valley Primary School Autism / SEMH provision in the east of the Authority)	2026/27	Head of SEND / Education Place Planning & Development Manager / Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP):		March 2025 – Primary Schools have been scoped with a possible two identified as possible schools to have an Autism/SEMH provision. Sufficiency analysis and SCAP forecasts to be used to ascertain this is the right provision for this area of the authority.
4.2.2	Explore opportunities to develop MLD resourced provision in secondary mainstream schools	2026/27	Head of SEND / Education Place Planning & Development Manager / Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP):		March 2025 – Possible secondary MLD site has been identified, and a project group has been set up to progress this work.
4.2.3	Develop primary MLD /SLD units in a network of primary schools (the total number of units to be determined by the Sufficiency Strategy)	2026/27	Head of SEND / Education Place Planning & Development Manager / Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP):		March 2025 – much work has been completed, and potential sites have been scoped.
4.2.4	Work with our Resource Provisions to review, and amend, their admissions criteria, supporting them to meet the needs of more complex children.	April 2025	SEND Re-banding Review Lead / Learning Support Services Manager / Interim Principal SEN Manager / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		March 2025: A desktop analysis of current SLAs for West Berkshire's Resource Bases and Units has been completed. A meeting is scheduled for 27/03 to discuss the findings of this desktop analysis. Discussions were had in the Creation of Specialist Placements meeting around standardising the SLAs and thinking about how this needs to tie into the banding review work. The SEND Re-banding Review Lead, Learning Support Services Manager & Interim Principal SEN Manager will be visiting the resource provisions/units in the coming weeks to start looking at description of need as part of the banding review work.

Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of available local specialist placements in mainstream provision Reduction in INMSS use and spend 						
4.3	Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision.					
4.3.1	Build additional classrooms at The Castle School to create additional places by April 2026	April 2026	Education Place Planning & Development Manager / Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: This is a four classroom newbuild which will be able to accommodate an additional 32 pupils. It is due for practical completion in December 2025. The additional classrooms are due to open in January 2026 to allow the schools to set up the classrooms, ensuring appropriate teaching and support staff are in place.
4.3.2	Determine whether the long-term need for special school places for children with learning difficulties can be met through expansion of existing local special schools or whether an additional special school needs to be developed, in partnership with neighbouring Local Authorities.	March 2026	Education Place Planning & Development Manager / Head of SEND / Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		
4.3.3	Work collaboratively with a range of providers (e.g. maintained, non-maintained, Academy, INMSS) to identify cost-effective and sustainable solutions to increasing local capacity, including through partnership working and commissioning approaches.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Commissioning Team / Education Place Planning & Development Manager (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		May 2025: Proposed new action developed in response to feedback requesting a reduction in duplicated actions, with a focus on broader, data-led priorities aligned with sufficiency plan, rather than overly specific tasks. Action to be agreed by Priority 4/5 in June 2025.
4.3.3	Work with local academies to identify opportunities for expanding specialist provision, ensuring that local options continue to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Commissioning Team / Education Place Planning & Development Manager (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		
4.3.4	Work with non-maintained and independent schools to identify opportunities for expanding access to specialist provision. Explore cost-effective solutions such as block purchasing of placements to ensure a sustainable, high quality range of specialist provision locally.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of specialist local provision places Reduction in INMSS use and spend 						
4.4	Develop bespoke packages of					

	support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons.					
4.4.1	Review Local Authority policy on education of children not attending school for health or other reasons (S19)	October 2025	Principal EWO and Safeguarding Lead & Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>March 2025 – A review of Local Authority Policy on education of children not attending school for health or other reasons (s19) was completed and presented at DMT in July 2024 but there was some delay in awaiting next steps, therefore this action is marked as delayed.</p> <p>Work around the thematic review/visit focussed on children not in school. Learning from the review will inform work in this area moving forward.</p>
4.4.2	Determine what additional resources are needed to ensure that the duty to make suitable provision for children not attending school for health or other reasons is fully met	December 2025	Principal EWO and Safeguarding Lead & Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		March 2025 – See update to action 4.4.1 above. This action is dependent on outcome of this action and a decision on additional actions following the thematic review/visit.
4.4.3	Ensure that there is the capacity to create and monitor bespoke educational packages for children who are not attending school (including through the use of personal budgets)	March 2026	Commissioning Team / Principal EWO and Safeguarding Lead & Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Through the budget process, we have secured the capacity to manage Personal Budgets, which we didn't have previously.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in Complaints (Stage 1 and Stage 2) & Local Government Ombudsman cases Reduction of cases in which children are not in receipt of education (S19), and a reduction in the time that they are out of education 						
4.5	Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short break offer to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families, locally.					
4.5.1	Use data analysis to review the availability and take-up of local short break provision, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of demand. This will inform the needs	March 2026	Commissioning Team / SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Head of Early Years &	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision		April 2025: SEND Strategy Officer and Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement are undertaking visits to Short Breaks providers to support with monitoring of what is currently being delivered and identifying areas where there is the need to develop the Short Breaks Offer. This will be analysed alongside a recent parent/carers feedback survey and handed over to the Commissioning Team when they are in post.

	analysis and short breaks procurement strategy and support the competitive tender process to commission provision that effectively meets the needs of children and young people with SEND across the Local Area.		Participation and Engagement (WBC)	(including AP)		
4.5.2	Collaborate with local providers to identify and address gaps in short break provision, such as after school and holiday club services in the East of the authority, post-16 short breaks and short breaks for children with complex health needs. As part of this process, use data analysis to inform a competitive tender process, ensuring that services are developed to meet these specific needs and are accessible across the Local Area.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Head of Early Years & Participation and Engagement (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		See above.
4.5.3	Explore the opportunity to expand access to provision following outcome of Parent Carer Needs Assessments (PCNA) improving access to provision ensuring it is inclusive and responsive to diverse family needs.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Head of Early Years & Participation and Engagement / Principal Social Worker & Academy Lead (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: See above. Requires commissioning team capacity.
4.5.4	Explore opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring Local Authorities to expand access to short break provision, enabling families to access support which might be geographically closer to them, even if this falls outside of Local Authority boundary. This will include mapping existing provision, identifying potential partnership opportunities and developing agreements to improve choice and accessibility for families.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: See above. Requires commissioning team capacity.
4.5.5	Through co-production with the Parent/Carer Forum ensure that information about Short Breaks is clear, accessible, and transparent on the Local Offer. This will include developing a 'One Page Service Offer' (previously known as plan on a page) that clearly sets out the 'Universal', 'Supported' and	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer/ Interim Head of Early Years & Participation and Engagement (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		

	'Specialist' short break provision available, along with eligibility criteria, to help families understand and access the support they need.		Forum			
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased offer for assessed and non-assessed short breaks, including in the East Satisfaction rates (SURVEY). 						
Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
5.1	Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need.					
5.1.1	Develop and implement an Alternative Provision Strategy for West Berkshire, which is informed by the annual refresh of the SEND Sufficiency Plan. The Alternative Provision Strategy will be co-produced with schools, children and young people and their families, to ensure it effectively meets local demand and addresses the needs of those requiring Alternative Provision.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / Principal EWO and Safeguarding Lead & Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: There is a requirement to first understand the data, before the strategy can be written.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of Alternative Provision placements available within the district Reduction in out of area placements Improved attendance, engagement and outcomes Earlier identification of emerging needs 						
5.2	Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of our learners for some, or all, of their education.					
5.2.1	Work with the market to develop a range of alternative provision available in West Berkshire to meet individualised needs of our children and young people	March 2026	Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.
5.2.2	Develop guidance for schools on commissioning and monitoring the	March 2026	Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.

	enhanced alternative provision offer			Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		
5.2.3	Establish commissioning and quality assurance processes in relation to alternative provision	March 2026	Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.
5.2.4	Create and embed the AP directory into the Local Offer website	March 2026	Commissioning Team / Specialist Information Officer EYs & Local Offer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased AP offer Fewer mainstream placement breakdowns Reduced INMSS Reduction in second chance mainstream placements and AP and specialist placements, from mainstream Regular QA reports provided 						
5.3	Further develop short- and medium-term alternative provision to enable students to re-engage with education and return to mainstream schools (iCollege).					
5.3.1	Develop additional KS3 capacity for medium term in-reach turnaround placements.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.
5.3.2	Explore the development of additional full-time OFSTED registered Alternative Provision to address gaps in provision, including for children in Early Years. This will focus on developing options that support pupils with re-engaging with education and successfully transitioning back into mainstream schools or colleges (where appropriate), ensuring a continuum of provision for all age groups.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of AP places at iCollege 						

- Increased AP placements from other providers
- Reduction in INMSS
- Reduction in exclusions and managed moves
- Overall increased attendance data

5.4	Develop short- and medium-term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting.					
5.4.1	Ensure that there are short term education placements available for children with high level needs moving into the area (for example Children in Care returning to or placed in West Berkshire; Pupils with a special school named on their EHCP who have recently moved into area), or at risk of PEX from specialist placement, whilst alternative permanent placements are identified.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / Head of SEND / Principal EWO and Safeguarding Lead & Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.
5.4.2	Work with schools and iCollege to ensure that referral information to iCollege provides SEND information, and that children and young people are correctly coded on census returns. This will help inform support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at referral information to ensure children and young people are coded as SEN Support or EHCP • Look at referral information to iCollege to ensure it captures need and thus ensures accurate recording 	December 2025	Commissioning Team / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.
5.4.3	Work with schools to review, and refine, coding practices for Permanent and Fixed-term exclusions to ensure the information received accurately reflects level of need. This will include ensuring that 'incidents' are appropriately categorised enabling a clearer understanding of reasons for exclusions; informing the development of targeted emergency Alternative Provision.	July 2025	SEN & DCT Business Manager / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH / Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		

Measures of success (how will we know?)

- Reduction in numbers of children without a school place (target 0)
- Reduction in time out of school placement

Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
6.1	Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation for adulthood for young people with SEND and their families.					
6.1.1	Through co-production with the Parent Carer Forum and Parent Champions, plan and deliver transition themed workshops for young people with SEND and their families.	March 2026	Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent Carer Forum / Parent Champions	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		
6.1.2	Review and improve the Preparation for Adulthood content of the SEND Local Offer website.	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement / Specialist Information Officer EYs & Local Offer (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		
6.1.3	Through co-production with young people with SEND, develop, and share, information on Preparation for Adulthood in a way that is accessible, meaningful and youth friendly. This will include involving young people in the creation of resources and developing effective ways of sharing this information with them.	March 2026	TBC	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – Discussion in PfA group that this work should be done with mainstream SEND pupils, given the work local specialist schools already complete with their pupils. Also discussed not ‘re-inventing- the wheel and making use of PfA resources design by NDTi.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased hits on P4A page of local offerIncreased satisfaction (Survey)Reduction in NEET						
6.2	Increase opportunities for young					

	people with SEND to secure employment, including the development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships.					
6.2.1	Develop a structured menu of work-related opportunities for young people with SEND, offering a range of experiences from short virtual interactions (e.g. a 1-hour career insight call) to extended placements such as T-Level industry placements. This will ensure varied levels of engagement to suit different needs and aspirations.	September 2025	Deputy Headteacher Castle School / Managing Director Ways into Work / HR (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – Contingent on Corporate Board paper detailed in action 6.2.3.
6.2.2	Implement work-related learning menu, embedding options across the organisation, and establish a process to monitor and evaluate its impact on increasing access to work-related learning activity within West Berkshire Council for young people with SEND.	March 2026	HR (WBC) / Deputy Headteacher Castle School / Managing Director Ways into Work	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – PfA group discussed the need to be mindful about having an effective monitoring process.
6.2.3	Work in partnership with 'Ways into Work' to offer supported internship placements at the Council	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer / HR (WBC) / Managing Director Ways into Work	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – Corporate Board paper due at DMT on 10 th April 2025 for presentation at Corporate Board to ensure corporate 'buy-in' to ensure successful delivery.
6.2.4	Once work-related learning opportunities and Supported Internships are embedded within the organisation, explore the opportunity for the Council to become a Level 3 Disability Confident Employer, taking into account the requirement for external assessment.	Longer term – 2027 / 2028	HR / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		
6.2.5	Work with Newbury College and 'Ways into Work' to increase the number of supported internships available locally	March 2026	SEN Manager (WBC)/ Managing Director Ways into Work / Newbury College	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		
6.2.6	Support the mobilisation of the newly procured joint children's and adult's Supported Employment Service, ensuring effective implementation. Establish a process to monitor its impact and effectiveness, while also developing and strengthening referral pathways to maximise access for young people with SEND.	March 2026	Commissioning Team / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC) / Managing Director Ways into Work	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – New service starts on 01/04. It will be a combined commissioned children's and adults supported employment service.

6.2.7	Conduct a data gathering exercise to understand the demand for Apprenticeships among young people with SEND, including their preferred sectors and career aspirations. Use this insight to inform a market engagement piece with training providers, and employers, addressing barriers and encouraging the development of suitable Apprenticeship opportunities.	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer / SEN Manager (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – PfA group discussed the need for schools to complete this action, but the SEND Team need to drive this work. The SEND Strategy Officer, Careers & Participation Officer and SEN Manager will have a separate meeting to discuss how to progress this action.
6.2.8	Work with employers to understand, and address, barriers to offering Apprenticeships for young people with SEND, providing guidance and support to increase employer confidence and participation.	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer / SEN Manager (WBC) / Newbury College	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		
6.2.9	Ensure the organisation remains up to date with national and local developments in Apprenticeships, adapting approaches to reflect policy changes and best practices. Work to attract high quality training providers in the area to improve the availability and accessibility of Apprenticeship opportunities for young people with SEND.	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer / SEN Manager / HR (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		
6.2.10	Assess the appetite for a joint SEND Employment Forum across Berkshire West (and beyond where applicable in line with government unitary authority direction) to enhance cross-border collaboration. This will involve engaging with key stakeholders to explore the potential benefits, feasibility and structure of such a forum.	December 2025	SEND Strategy Officer / SEN Manager (WBC) / Managing Director Ways into Work	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – Discussion in PfA group that progress on this action should be put on hold for the time being given the work around Connect to Work with other Berkshire Local Authorities currently forming their plans. This action will be discussed again at the next PfA meeting on 19/05.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased numbers of young people with SEND in supported internships Increased numbers of young people with SEND in supported internships with WBC Increased numbers of young people in Apprenticeships 						
6.3	Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning.					
6.3.1	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and FE Providers setting out the expected uses of Element 3 funding	December 2025	SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 - Being reviewed by Legal team. Believe a NASS standard contract agreement may be a better approach. Working through with legal team.
6.3.2	Implement transition checklist within Annual Review process, ensuring	March 2026	Interim Principal SEN Manager	Priority 6: Preparation for		

	an effective transition from school to FE college. Test the checklist in practice and monitor its impact on facilitating a smoother and more successful transition for young people with SEND.		(WBC)	Adulthood		
6.3.3	Ensure professionals are aware of young people's rights to communicate independently from the age of 16, provided they have the mental capacity to do so, and involve them directly in decision-making with an awareness that young person, and parent views may sometimes differ. Empower Parent Champions to advocate for young people's voice, helping parents to understand their child's rights.	December 2025	Head of SEND / Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) / Parent Champions	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – PfA group discussed the need to ensure there is the right representation at the group. Beth Kelly to be invited to the next meeting on 19/05.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEET data • Consistent offer across settings • Destination measures • Decrease in number of ISP placements • Increased number of ceased EHCPs 						
6.4	Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community.					
6.4.1	Gather the views of young people with SEND & their parents/carers to understand the services they believe are needed for meaningful engagement and participation. Use this feedback to create, and promote, a directory of services offering meaningful activities for young people who may not be able to access paid employment, ensuring the directory aligns with their needs and preferences.	December 2025	Team Leader - Transitions / Social Worker ASC / SEN Manager (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – PfA group discussed the need for a plan to progress this work. Richard and Magda to produce a plan which will be shared at the next meeting on 19/05.
6.4.2	Develop, and deliver, targeted training for staff in adult's services (health and social care) on complex health needs, to ensure a smooth transition for children moving from children's to adult's services. This will include equipping professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support young people with complex health needs,	March 2026	Adult Services	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		March 2025 – DCO informed SEND Strategy Officer that it is the responsibility of the employer for training of staff. Where possible, the DCO will support with linking relevant staff meetings and also sits within the DHCT meetings which are run by the ICB and has LA members in attendance.

	ensuring continuity of care.					
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduction in ISP placementsReduction in residential placements for 18-25 year olds						
6.5	Ensure pathways from children to adults' health services work smoothly and are clearly understood.					
6.5.1	Audit and review effectiveness/engagement of the impact of letters sent by Children's Community Nurses informing families of transition progress for the young person for whom the letter was intended.	March 2026	Community Children's Nurse & Specialist School Nurse Manager (BHFT)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		
6.5.2	Map the transition pathways for all health services accessed by young people with SEND, ensuring young person voice is incorporated in this activity. There will be established working links between the Local Offer and BHFT & RBFT websites. This information should be in a clear and accessible format to support effective transitions.	January 2026	Designated Clinical Officer (BOB ICB)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of LD Health checks completed						
7. Enablers						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025-31 March 2026	RAG Status *	Commentary
7.1	Maintain, and build upon the progress made with the development of a digital plan and creation of SEND data dashboards. This will enable us to continue to collect, use and share data more effectively. The evolution of the SEND Data Dashboards will provide leaders with continued effective oversight.	March 2026	Strategic Support (WBC)	Data Task & Finish Group Internal SEND Operational Group		March 2025 – The SEND Data dashboard has been developed but requires ongoing development as part of business as usual to ensure it is capturing all data sets required. Consultancy time from DfE is supporting with developing an Early Years dashboard.
7.2	Maintain the established governance structure for signing off data that	March 2026	Head of SEND / SEND Strategy	Internal SEND Operational		March 2025 - Data dashboards are presented at DMT for approval. The newly formed cross agency data scrutiny and accountability group feed into the SEND Strategic Improvement Board.

	enables accuracy to be checked, priorities to be identified and actions monitored across all partner agencies.		Officer (WBC)	Group Quarterly Multi-Agency Data Scrutiny & Accountability Meeting		This enabler has been reworded in this delivery plan to ensure momentum around this area of work.
7.3	Routinely share SEND Data with schools (heads, governors and SENDCos) and use this to collectively identify actions that support improvement.	March 2026	Head of SEND / Service Director Education & SEND (WBC)	Internal SEND Operational Group		March 2025 – This work is delayed, there is a requirement to develop a mechanism of sharing data with schools.
7.4	Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future.	March 2026	Public Health/ SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority 2: Early Intervention SEND Sufficiency Plan Task & Finish Group (Annual)		March 2025 – This work is delayed. Public Health have been working to recruit to a data analyst with one of their responsibilities being to review and update the JSNA. It is anticipated this update would also include a ‘State of the Nation’ report which sets out key health and social care needs of the population. It is anticipated that the review will be conducted by December 2025 and the ‘State of the Nation’ report will be published by March 2026. The SEND Sufficiency data will be shared with Public Health.
7.5	Explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).	December 2025	Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC)	Data Task & Finish Group		March 2025 – Opportunities have been explored with Idox EHC Hub and Agilisys’s EHCP Plus with the latter offering a free trial. This is being explored with support from West Berkshire’s transformation team.
7.6	Develop a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND.	September 2025	Service Director Education & SEND (WBC)	Internal SEND Operational Group SEND Strategic Improvement Board		March 2025 – This work is delayed. A proposed Commissioning Team Structure and job descriptions has been approved, but the progress of this is now reliant on Transformation which cannot yet be released.
7.7	Review and refresh the Quality Assurance Framework for EHCPs, an example will be provided.	October 2025	SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Internal SEND Operational Group SEND Strategic Improvement Board		March 2025 – This work is delayed. Approval and funding have been agreed to purchase a two-year license of the Invision360 EHCP and Annual Review tools. This has been approved via Procurement Board and is currently with legal to review the SaaS agreements. To sit alongside this, a Quality Assurance Framework is being developed to outline expectations of the local area of engagement with quality assurance activity.
7.8	Work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.	September 2025	Commissioning Team (WBC)	Internal SEND Operational Group		March 2025 – This action has not started as is linked to the proposed new Children’s Services Commissioning function.
7.9	Support the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children & young people and their families.	March 2026	Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Internal SEND Operational Group SEND Strategic Improvement Board		March 2025 - Regular support now in place for new PCF. Supporting recruitment to PCF via Directory, engagement events, Family Hubs, SEND Local Offer, 50 Things APP. PCF are attending Family Hub parent drop-ins. PCF membership expanding steadily and Contact Associate in place to support create PCF constitution and robust processes. Structure chart creation to support understanding of council services (post DBV) underway.
7.10	Enhance the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Internal SEND Operational		March 2025 – SEND Youth Participation Worker is now on maternity leave. There is not the capacity in other roles to pick up the oversight and running of the SEND Youth Forum. A strategic

	leaders can respond to the views of children and young people.			Group		decision has been taken to pause the SEND Youth Forum for a period of 6 months, when this will be reviewed. It has been raised in the PfA Task Group that young person voice and young person co-production is currently lacking in our work.
7.11	<p>Ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clawback • Banding exercise • Use of Element 2 • Review of HNB spend 	August 2025	SEND Rebanding Review Lead (WBC)	Internal SEND Operational Group		March 2025 – This work is ongoing through the outcomes of the SEND Banding Review and Schools Forum. Clawback was completed for 23/24
7.12	<p>Develop a West Berkshire Schools Accessibility Policy (example provided) that supports delivery of the local area SEND and Inclusion Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of this policy will be monitored, particularly through the auditing of school's SEN Information Reports to ensure the requirements of the Accessibility Policy are being met contributing to improving accessibility and inclusion for all pupils with SEND and those who are vulnerable. 	March 2026	SEND Strategy Officer / School Improvement (WBC)	Priority 3: Inclusion		<p>March 2025 – Accessibility Policy has been written and is published on the Local Offer although the page on which this is hosted needs to be completed.</p> <p>This enabler has been extended in this new delivery plan to ensure there is some monitoring of schools SEN Information reports etc. as outlined in the Accessibility Policy.</p>
7.13	<p>We will ensure our SEND Local Offer is a dynamic and user-friendly resource that meets the needs of children, young people, their families and professionals. To achieve this, we will focus on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous Improvement: Regular reviews and feedback will shape ongoing development, keeping the Local Offer relevant, accessible, and reflective of available support. • Effective Governance: A clear decision-making structure will be in place to drive improvements, respond to feedback, and ensure the Local Offer evolves in line with local needs and strategic priorities. • Accountable Leadership: An accountable officer will oversee the improvements, statutory compliance and co-production with families and stakeholders. 	March 2026	Head of SEND / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Internal SEND Operational Group		March 2025 – New enabler added to the delivery plan for 2025-2026

*RAG Status				
Not started	Overdue/Unresolved Issue	Partial Completion	Started – On Track	Completed

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LGSCO Recommendations Report

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	5 th June 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	April 2025
Report Author:	Sue O'Brien

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to share Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) recommendations of their recent investigation (LGSCO 23018177).
- 1.2. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is an independent body that investigates complaints against local councils and adult social care providers. They are responsible for ensuring that these organisations act fairly and properly, and they can recommend remedies for injustices, such as compensation or policy changes.
- 1.3. Following the investigation, West Berkshire produced an action plan to address the recommendations, one of which was for this to be presented to scrutiny.

2 Recommendation(s)

For the Committee to note the recommendation and the action plan and be assured that the areas identified are being improved and addressed.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Remedy of £200 was paid to the complainant on the recommendation of the LGSCO.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications with this report
Legal:	There are no legal implications with this report .

Risk Management:	Potential of further financial loss through complaint remedies if the service does not learn from the review and makes the following changes and training from the action plan produced.			
Property:	There are no property implications with this report			
Policy:	Local policies in relation to Safeguarding and Child protection policies			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Environmental Impact:		x		
Health Impact:		x		
ICT Impact:		x		
Digital Services Impact:		x		

Council Strategy Priorities:		x		
Core Business:		x		
Data Impact:		x		
Consultation and Engagement:	Quality Assurance and Assessment Service (QAAS) & Children with Disability Team (CWDT). The Principal Social Worker, and Service Director.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1. Children's Services are bringing this review to the scrutiny committee as part of recommendations set out by the LGSCO in relation to a complaint that they investigated.
- 4.2. The complaint was brought by Mrs X who complained about how the Council carried out Child Protection proceedings for her child, D, in 2023 and 2024. She says the Council failed to:
 - complete the actions set out in the Child Protection Plan.
 - properly conduct Child Protection Conferences to update and make decisions about the Plan.
 - properly consider her views during the proceedings.
 - communicate properly and transparently with her about the proceedings; and
 - respond when she complained about these issues.
- 4.3. Ms X says the Council caused her distress because of its failings and the prolonged Child Protection proceedings. Mrs X wants the Council to properly complete actions in the Child Protection Plan and give the family the help they need.
- 4.4. The LGSCO found some fault in the way the Council carried out certain aspects of its Child Protection processes.
- 4.5. LGSCO found, the Council delayed its child protection processes, allowed the Child Protection Plan to drift without substantive action, and failed to properly consider Ms X's views or respond to her complaint. The LGSCO cannot say, even on the balance of probabilities, how this fault may have affected the child protection decisions the Council made. It cannot say what the Council would have decided if it had followed its procedures without fault, or if it had properly considered a complaint from Ms X about this. It may be this would not have changed anything for the family. D is now an adult so is no longer under child protection procedures, so we would not ask the Council to carry out further proceedings and make its decisions again.
- 4.6. The LGSCO decided fault by the Council caused Ms X injustice as follows.

- Ms X missed an opportunity to have her concerns about the process considered and responded to, via the correct procedure. If the Council had considered this it is a possibility this could have resulted in a decision to reconvene an RCPC, and decisions being reconsidered. There remains uncertainty for Ms X about how things may have been different, which causes her avoidable distress.
- Ms X spent avoidable time and trouble in bringing the complaint to us because the Council did not respond to it.

4.7. The LGSCO provided recommended actions which the Council agreed to action within one month of their final decision, the Council should:

- a) apologise to Ms X for the faults identified and the impact of those faults. We publish [guidance on remedies](#) which sets out our expectations for how organisations should apologise effectively to remedy injustice. The Council should consider this guidance in making its apology;
- b) pay Ms X £200 to recognise the avoidable distress, uncertainty, time, and trouble caused; and place a copy of our final decision on its records about Ms X, so there is a record of the faults we identified with how it carried out child protection proceedings.

4.8. Within three months of our final decision the Council should:

- a) review how it handled the child protection proceedings from January 2023 to May 2024 in light of our findings.
- b) produce a dated action plan of how it will avoid recurrence of the same faults by making changes to practice and procedure or staff training; and report this review outcome and action plan to its relevant overview and scrutiny committee so it can decide how progress against the plan should be monitored.

4.9. All recommendations have been completed and outlined in the action plan.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1. Children's Services can confirm that all recommendations from the LGSCO complaint decision are completed and want to share the review and actions with the committee for them to note and be assured by the actions.
- 5.2. The review was carried out by Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service (QAAS) and Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT) in relation to the child protection proceedings from January 2023 to May 2024 and a report was completed and an action plan created.
- 5.3. This action plan has and will continue to ensure that future child protection conferences follow robust procedures, particularly when there are factors that could cause delays and miss statutory deadlines.
- 5.4. The service will ensure robust working with partners to remove ambiguity in shared procedures ensures that all partners fully understand their responsibilities.

- 5.5. There are robust procedures and training in place which will ensure that Service Managers will challenge at a higher level where Child protection plans are failing to progress.
- 5.6. A robust complaints procedure is followed to address issues at a local level to ensure that families and young people have an opportunity to have their concerns addressed and we have an opportunity to investigate and support the services early to recognise some of the issues highlighted in the LGSCO report.
- 5.7. West Berkshire Children's Services will continue to learn and reduce occurrences of the same mistake by continuously learning and changing the way we work.
- 5.8. It is important to note, that over the 12 months, there has been a significant change in leadership within Children's Services, there is robust auditing in place and performance data is scrutinised regularly within a monthly Performance and Quality Assurance Board chaired by the Service Director. Child Protection processes and procedures are reviewed and adhered to and there are no significant concerns around delay in this area, Issues are raised in a timely manner and addressed accordingly.
- 5.9. Children's Services are confident that the concerns raised within this complaint has been addressed fully.

6 Appendices

See Part II

Background Papers:

03/02/2025 Final Report

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected: N/A

Officer details:

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Job Title: Children, Family and Education Complaint and Data Manager
Tel No: 01635 503528
E-mail: ccsc@westberks.gov.uk

Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

1. This document gives 28 clear days notice of key decisions which the Executive and Individual Executive Members or Officer expect to take.
2. The document is updated as required and is available to the public on the Council's website.
3. The Executive is made up of the Executive Leader, Deputy Leader and eight Executive Members with the following portfolios:

Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategy and Communications	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Planning and Housing	Councillor Denise Gaines
Finance and Resources	Councillor Iain Cottingham
Adult Social Care and Public Health	Councillor Patrick Clark
Children and Family Services	Councillor Heather Codling
Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside	Councillor Nigel Foot
Environment and Highways	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment)	Councillor Tom McCann
Transformation and Corporate Programme	Councillor Vicky Poole
Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation	Councillor Justin Pemberton

4. Key decisions are those executive decisions which are likely to result in spending or savings which are "significant" in relation to the budget for the service or function in question, or in terms of the effect on communities living or working in two or more wards or electoral divisions. All contracts above £500,000 require a key decision in accordance with the Constitution.
5. The Regulations and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in this document in accordance with General Exception and Special Urgency provisions.
6. The Forward Plan will also contain details of intended review activity by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and its Sub-Committee(s) or another body e.g. Task Group associated with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
7. Copies of the Council's Constitution and agenda and minutes for all meetings of the Council may be accessed on the Council's website.
8. For copies of reports or other documents, and for detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Executive, individual Member or officer please contact the named Lead Officer for the item concerned.
9. For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please email executivecycle@westberkshire.gov.uk or by writing to the address below.

Publication Date: 1 May 2025

Nicola Thomas
Service Lead
Legal & Democratic Services
West Berkshire Council, Council Offices
Market Street
Newbury
RG14 5LD

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
22 May 2025	LGA Peer Review Children's Services		No	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open
22 May 2025	LGA Corporate Peer Review Follow Up		No	Executive			Joseph Holmes	Open
22 May 2025	Carers Strategy 2024-27		Yes	Executive			Hannah Cole	Open
22 May 2025	Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report and Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh		No	Executive			Jenny Graham	Open
22 May 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Sadie Owen	Open
29 May 2025	Amendment to Streetworks	To review and approve	No	Jon Winstanley -			Neil Stacey	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Permit Scheme Order	changes to the Council's Streetworks Permit Scheme, principally to increase the fees charged to statutory undertakers for carrying out works on the highway.		Service Director				
3 Jul 2025	Response to Public Open Spaces motion	Response to Cllr Amirtharaj Motion	No	Executive			Laura Callan	Open
3 Jul 2025	Block Beds '9 Month Extension'	An extension to the current contract by 9 months	Yes	Executive			Thomas Bailey	Open
3 Jul 2025	Q4 Performance Report 2024/25		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
3 Jul 2025	New Developments Task Group	Recommendations of the New Developments	No	Executive			Laura Callan	Open

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		Health Scrutiny Task Group						
3 Jul 2025	Rights of Way Improvement Plan	To present the revised plan following public consultation.	Yes	Executive			Elaine Cox	Open
3 Jul 2025	Future of the Shared Partnership for the Public Protection Partnership	To fulfil the requirement of the IAA which is due to expire in January 2027, which requires the partner authorities to review the current arrangements and adopt any changes 2 years before the current arrangement expires.	No	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
3 Jul 2025	Capital outturn report		No	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
3 Jul 2025	Revenue Outturn report		No	Executive			Chris Dagnall	Open

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3 Jul 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
3 Jul 2025	Public Health Re-Structure		Yes	Executive			Dr Matt Pearce	Open
18 Sep 2025	Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report		No	Executive			Karl Davis	Open
18 Sep 2025	Youth Justice Annual Plan		No	Executive			Dave Wraight	Open
18 Sep 2025	Care Leaver Annual Report		No	Executive			Karl Davis	Open
18 Sep 2025	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Chris Dagnall	Open
18 Sep 2025	ASC Annual Report		No	Executive			Melanie O'Rourke	Open

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18 Sep 2025	Early Help Response Hub Annual report		No	Executive			Karen Atalla	Open
18 Sep 2025	2025/26 Performance Report Q1		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
18 Sep 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
18 Sep 2025	Capital Financial Performance Report Q1 2025/26	To present the Q1 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Richard Quayle	Open
16 Oct 2025	Ridgeway Council Proposal		Yes	Council			Sarah Clarke	Open
6 Nov 2025	Capital Financial Performance Report - Q2 of 2025/26	To present the Q2 capital financial performance for Members to	No	Executive			Richard Quayle	Open

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		note.						
6 Nov 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
6 Nov 2025	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q2 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	No	Executive			Chris Dagnall	Open
18 Dec 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
18 Dec 2025	2025/26 Performance Report Q2		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
12 Feb 2026	Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2026-27		Yes	Executive			Richard Quayle	Open
12 Feb 2026	Medium Term Financial Strategy		Yes	Executive			Richard Quayle	Open

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	2026/27							
12 Feb 2026	Capital Financial Performance Report Q3 2025/26	To present the Q3 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Richard Quayle	Open
12 Feb 2026	Revenue Budget 2026/27		Yes	Executive			Chris Dagnall	Open
12 Feb 2026	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q3 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Chris Dagnall	Open
21 May 2026	2025/26 Performance Report Q3		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
	Legal Services - Childcare Committee	The report considers several options for providing legal services	No	Executive			Sarah Clarke	Open

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	considering report:	to Children's Services, to ensure that this is provided in the most cost-effective manner.						
	Garden Waste Charging Options		Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
	Waste Contract Paper		Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
	Adults Homelessness	Contract Award	Yes	Executive			Rebecca Braithwaite	Open
	Leisure Strategy Delivery Plan	To present the plan for implementing the Leisure Strategy.	Yes	Executive			Jude Thomas	Open
	Joint Legal team (JLT) Review	To agree a revised Heads of Term Agreement and to delegate authority to the	Yes	Executive			Nicola Thomas	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any

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		Service Lead, Legal and Democratic Services to finalise the same.						particular person (including the authority holding that information) Information which reveals that the authority proposes to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any

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								enactment.
	Gateway Plaza update		No	Executive			Sam Robins	Open
	LRIE lease acquisitions	To seek Executive sign-off to make an offer to buy-back the leases on plots 13U and 13T on the LRIE, subject to a satisfactory price being agreed at negotiations which are currently underway with the leaseholders on the sites.	Yes	Executive			Sam Robins	Open
	Parking Strategy 2023-2033	To consider and approve the West Berkshire Council Parking Strategy 2023-2033.	Yes	Executive			Ian Martinez	Open

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	Proposed Allocation of the Household Support Fund April 2025 - March 2026.	To propose a continuation of the successful programme delivered with the voluntary sector and our partners at Greenham Trust and agree the allocations for the funding period.	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing			Nick Caprara	Open
	Contract Award report for West Point House Refurbishment Project	Contract value estimated to be £990k therefore included on the Forward Plan for information	No	Joseph Holmes - Chief Executive			Vickie Collins	Open
	Kennet Valley Primary School SEMH Provision	Contract award report for the Kennet Valley expansion works following a full tender process. Contract value estimated at £1.8 million	Yes	Paul Coe - Executive Director			Vicky Pearce	Open
	Contract	Contract award	Yes	AnnMarie			Vicky Pearce	Open

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	Award report for Mrs Blands Infant and Nursery School Heating Replacement	report for heating replacement works at Mrs Blands School following a full tender process. Contract value estimated at £500k.		Dodds - Executive Director				
	Parking Review Amendment Order No 35 (A4 Thatcham area)	To consider responses received during statutory consultation period.	No	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Gareth Dowding	Open
	Parking review Amendment Order No 36 (Kings Road Newbury area)	To consider responses received during statutory consultation period.	No	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Gareth Dowding	Open
	Parking Review Amendment Order No 37	To consider responses received during statutory	No	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Gareth Dowding	Open

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	(various locations)	consultation period.						
	Parking Review Amendment Experimental Order No 38 (Electric Vehicle Charging Bays - various locations)	To consider responses received during statutory consultation period.	No	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Gareth Dowding	Open

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme						
Item		Scrutiny Theme	Purpose	Lead Officer	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member	Pre or post decision?
11 September 2025						
	Development of Family Hubs & The Early Help Offer in West Berkshire	Corporate Effectiveness	To explain how Family Hubs and the Early Help Officer is developing in West Berkshire	Dave Wraight	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPS Decision
	Educational Attendance, Attainment and Outcomes	Corporate Effectiveness	To provide an updated on educational attendance, attainment and outcomes for children in West Berkshire and how the Council is seeking to improve preformance in these areas.	Neil Goddard	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPS Decision
	Youth Justice Annual Plan	Policy Effectiveness	To present the Youth Justice Plan for 2025-2026	Dave Wraight/ Stacey Clay	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	Pre-Decision - Executive (18 Sep 2025)
	Children's Social Care Complaints Annual Report	Corporate Effectiveness	To present the Children's Social Care Complaints Annual Report for 2024/25, including feedback from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Rebecca Wilshire	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPS Decision
04 December 2025						
03 March 2025						

Last updated: 27 May 2025

- Council Strategy Priorities**
- Priority Area 1 - Services We Are Proud Of
 - Priority Area 2 - A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All
 - Priority Area 3 - Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency
 - Priority Area 4 - A Prosperous and Resilient West Berkshire
 - Priority Area 5 - Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice

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