

# SLOUGH QUARTERLY PROGRESS REVIEW ON WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION

4th March 2024

Signed by:

**SUE BUTCHER**

**Executive Director People Children's / CXSCF Slough Childrens  
First**



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*Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving*

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## **Introduction**

The improved performance in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) evidenced in the November monitoring report has been maintained to date. Nevertheless, this needs to be set against the evidence of the position the SEND Service was in at the time of the February 2023 Written Statement of Action (WSOA) meeting that led to the issuing of the Statutory Direction. Education settings, families and partners support the view of clear improvement against a very low bar,

The WSoA tracker evidences the progress that has been made in completing the individual actions. There has been more progress since the development of a new SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan presented to the SEND Partnership Board in July 2023. Currently 63 actions are rated as Blue (Closed) and 20 are Green (fully on track). 8 actions were only partially complete at the deadline agreed in the WSoA implementation plan of December 2023. For all these actions, plans are in place to ensure that they will be completed by the end of May 2024. 2 further actions are rated Amber because there is a risk that they might miss the May 2024 deadline without further mitigations. It should be noted that several actions, although rated as complete, cannot be signed off by the Partnership Board or the DfE until there is consistent evidence of impact.

Partnership working continues to be a central element in SEND improvements. Feedback from social care staff and SEND officers evidences the growing teamwork and the Autumn Term Visit Questionnaires to all schools found a growing trust in the SEND service. Health colleagues are an integral part of the EHC plan assessment panel and the newly appointed DCO is already working closely with SBC teams. As part of the Frimley Children and Young People Operational Plan 2023-2024 a range of investment bids to support several service areas to support children with mental health challenges have been successful. This follows improvements in reducing waiting times for health therapies, Speech and Language provision and the agreement of a dysphasia service based at Arbour Vale School.

As a result of better processes and training, the performance of the Statutory 0-25 SEND Team has been consistently higher since the Summer of 2023. A significantly higher level of EHC plans have been completed each month and the percentage completed within statutory timescales, although still below national benchmarks, has risen consistently across the year. Similarly, the overall quality of plans has improved although this remains a key focus for improvement. There will also need to be increased attention on annual reviews now that the EHC assessment process is operating more efficiently.

The SEND service is beginning to receive positive feedback from families and education settings. This paper includes evidence of this from a Special Voices survey, the Autumn Term Visit Inclusion Questionnaire completed by 50 out of 51 Slough schools, feedback from the SENCo Network and the Slough Inclusion Conference in January as well as individual communications from schools and settings including lived

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experience evidence. Nevertheless, issues remain in the communication with schools and families as well as failure to achieve statutory timescales and the quality of EHC plans.

Therefore, although it is important to celebrate the improvements that have been made there needs to be recognition that there is a long way to go to establish a consistently good service for children and young people with SEND.

### **Headlines**

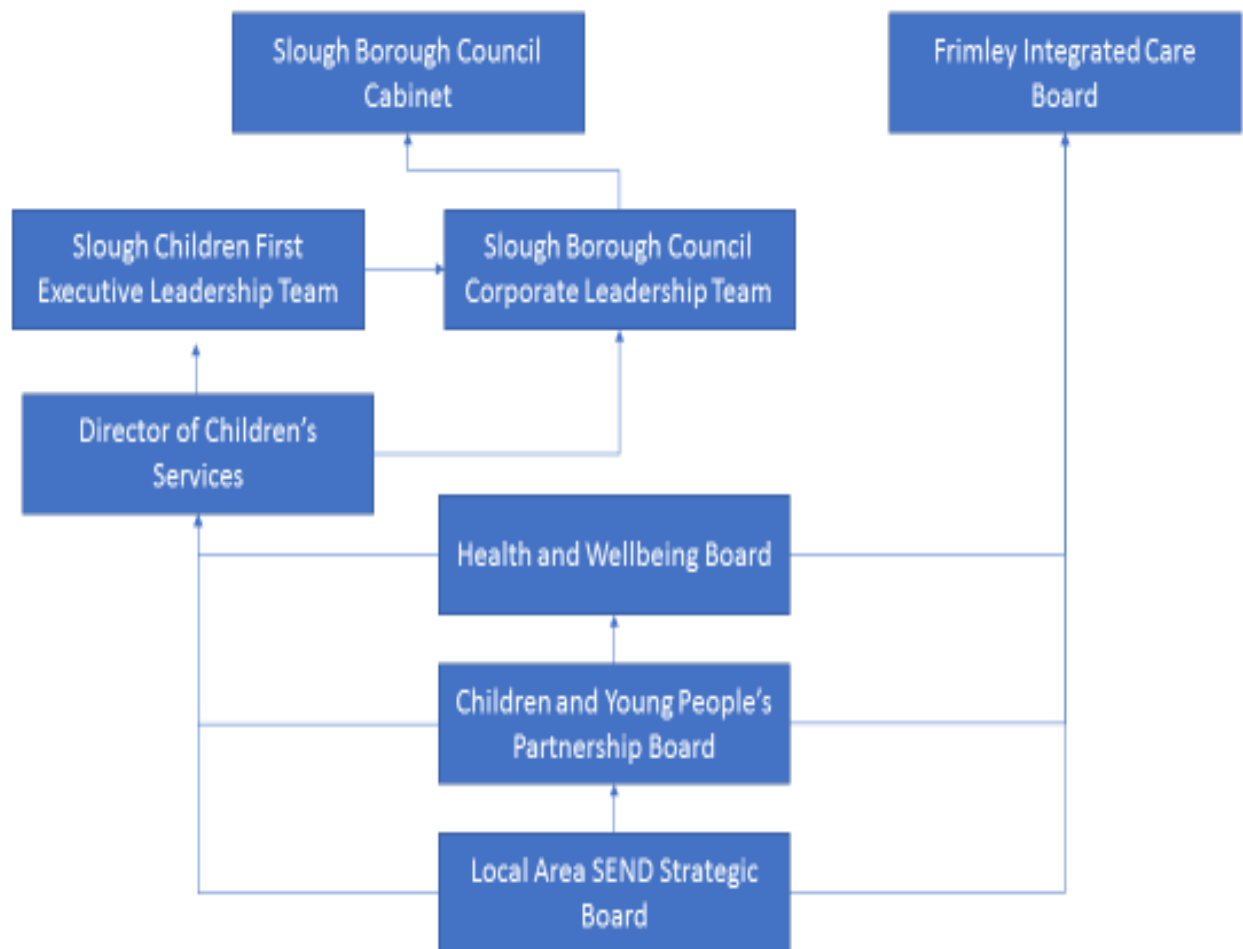
The key points that you will read in this update report are:

- The report evidences the increased pace in completing the actions within the WSoA. The report also contains the mitigations that have been put in place to ensure that the Red and Amber rated actions will be finished by the end of May.
- The performance of the SEND Team has improved over the last few months and this is evidenced in the report and in Appendix 1 (EHC plan data). Feedback from families and education settings supports the view that the SEND service is operating at a higher level although this is from a low base.
- The questionnaire that school leaders complete before the Autumn Capacity and Risk Visits showed that 'inclusion' is a core focus for many schools. A range of strong inclusive practice was identified that informed an Inclusion Conference in January 2024.
- Significant developments in the implementation of the Frimley Children and Young People Operational Plan 2023-2024.
- The Joint Commissioning Strategy has been revised in discussion with Slough Borough Council commissioners and now aligns to wider Childrens Services commissioning practices.
- Although staffing pressures to support the Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Lead have led to a reduction in operational impetus in this area in recent weeks, a great deal of progress has been made. There is now a greater awareness amongst all stakeholders of the importance of preparing for adulthood from the earliest of years and how this must be embedded in the work which is done with all young people in all areas of education, health and social care.
- The SEND Service has embraced the collection of lived experienced evidence from children, young people and their families which is included in the report.

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### **WSoA Priorities and Responsibilities**

The Slough SEND 0-25 Local Area Strategic Board is accountable for the delivery of progress against the WSoA and has the following reporting lines into decision-making forums at Slough Borough Council [SBC], Slough Children First [SCF] and Frimley ICS.



The partnership has assigned lead responsibility for enabling delivery of the actions to the following colleagues:

<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Priority Area Title</b>	<b>Responsible Owners</b>
<b>1</b>	There are weak arrangements for ensuring effective joint leadership and accountability, self-evaluation and improvement planning at a strategic level across education, health and care services [including considering the high turnover of staff and an area-wide commitment to inclusion].	<p><b>Neil Hoskinson</b> [Director Education]</p> <p><b>Len Brazier</b> [Head of SEND 0-25 Commissioning]</p>

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2	The overlooked voice of the children and young people with SEND and their families and consequent lack of understanding of their lived experiences and the lack of readily available, helpful and accurate information in this regard.	<p><b>Adele Simpson</b> [Preparation for Adulthood Lead]</p> <p><b>Gary Nixon</b> [Principal Educational Psychologist]</p>
3	There is a lack of effective use of meaningful performance information to inform the area's strategy and planning, as well as to evaluate its effectiveness.	<p><b>Dave Hounsell</b> [Group Manager – Data, Insight, Strategy, Transformation]</p>
4	There are limited opportunities for parents, carers and children and young people with SEND to be involved in planning and reviewing area services.	<p><b>Brynmor Smart</b> [SEND 0-25 Service Lead]</p> <p><b>Gary Nixon</b> [Principal Educational Psychologist]</p>
5	The timeliness with which EHC plans are produced and updated, particularly nearing transition points, and the absence of systematic processes for the quality assurance of EHC plans.	<p><b>Brynmor Smart</b> [SEND 0-25 Service Lead]</p> <p><b>Len Brazier</b> [Head of SEND 0-25 &amp; Lead Commissioner]</p>
6	The absence of social care considerations in EHC plans, for children and young people not known to children's social care, and in services in the area, including the lack of age-appropriate social opportunities for children and young people and limited offer of short-break or respite services for parents and carers.	<p><b>Ben Short</b> [Director Social Care, Slough Children First]</p>
7	There is inequitable access to SALT and OT services, excessive waiting lists and waiting times and the absence of a dysphagia service for those aged five and over.	<p><b>Alison Woodiwiss</b> [Head of Transformation, CYP Mental Health and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Frimley Integrated Care System]</p>

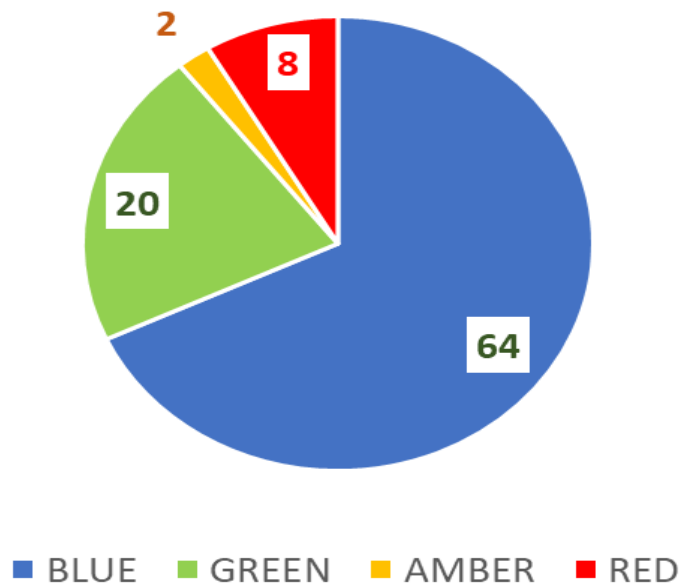
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**Where are we now?**

From the publishing of the Local Area Inspection Report in November 2021 until the Summer of 2023, only twenty actions were completed of which nine were health actions linked to integrated therapies. This represented just over 20% of the total number of actions in the WSoA.

Since the implementation of the improvement plan, another seventeen actions were completed by September 2023 and a further 27 by the end of December 2023. 8 more actions, originally with a December 2023 deadline, have been partially achieved (Red Rated) and this report sets out the mitigations that have been put in place to ensure that they will be fully achieved by the end of May 2024. Of the remaining 22 actions that are due to be completed by May 2024, 20 are on track (Green) and 2 are rated as Amber. Therefore, 64 actions (68%) are complete and 20 more (21%) are on track.

The report also contains the mitigations that have been put in place to ensure that the 9 Red rated actions and the 2 Amber rated actions will be finished by the end of May. It will be very important that there is no further slippage in timescales if the aim of completing all actions by the end of May 2024 is to be achieved.



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**General update on progress or areas of significant impact on the local area e.g., staffing**

**Staffing Changes**

In the last report for November, the impact of the new Principal Educational Psychologist, SEND Operational Team Leader, SEND Statutory 0-25 Team Managers together with the new leads for Inclusion and Preparation for Adulthood was identified as an important priority. The impact of these staff is clear in the improvement journey described in this report.

Maintaining a stable team of case officers has previously been identified as a significant strength and so it needs to be flagged as a risk that five officers have given notice and need to be replaced. Interviews are on-going and we are confident that we will recruit officers who will take us to the next stage of our SEND improvement journey.

The SEND service is beginning to receive positive feedback from families and education settings. A consultant headteacher coordinates the Autumn Term Capacity and Risk Visits to all schools and found that the responses “were almost universally positive!” There was “strong acknowledgement that LA processes have improved” although “this is caveated by comments around the low bar this is being judged against”. This supports the LA view that SEND Services have improved from a low base but that there is a long way to go. Headteachers based this on the significant improvement in the EHC plan process although concerns were raised about the extent of backlog cases.

Feedback from our Parent Carer Forum, Special Voices, mirrors this view with half of parent/carers attending an Information Sharing Session in November stating that they felt that education had improved for their child since the previous session four months earlier. Nevertheless, issues remain in the communication with schools and families as well as failure to achieve statutory timescales and the quality of EHC plans. A new Communications Strategy will be developed with support from the LGA to help to address these concerns.

**Inclusion in Mainstream Schools**

The questionnaire that school leaders complete before the Autumn Capacity and Risk Visits showed that ‘inclusion’ is a core focus for many schools. It is clear that young people with ever more complex needs are attending mainstream settings and schools need to adapt both their core curriculums and their pedagogy to be accessible to ‘all’. The concentric circles of inclusive classrooms, inclusive schools and inclusive communities are being addressed with the Slough School Leaders

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Conference in January, but this is not a 'one-off' issue and it is good to note that schools are taking this on as an area for continuous improvement

Schools already feel they are providing good care for those pupils with EHC plans and those on SEND Support. A range of strong inclusive practice was identified in the Autumn Term Visits including examples of schools meeting more complex needs by creating additional resource areas such as nurture areas, sensory circuits and garden areas.

Primary schools have raised concerns about an increase in the number of pupils with more complex needs joining Reception classes, with more complex needs, that were previously unidentified or where the child had not attended Nursery previously. The Early Years Inclusion Officers now track the current Reception cohort to see which pupils receive SEND Support and EHC plans. Headteachers have requested additional training and specialist advice on creating 'inclusive classrooms' at primary school to tackle pupils with significant additional needs would be appreciated.

At secondary the overlap of SEND and behaviour (and lack of AP places) remains a concern and those that schools that rely on AP are hoping for a positive outcome to ongoing discussions about the commissioning of places at Haybrook College.

### **Health Updates**

There have been significant developments in the implementation of the Frimley Children and Young People Operational Plan 2023-2024 which evolved from the Year five iteration of the Local Transformation Plan (2019-2024). Notable achievements are as follows:

Investment bids to support the mobilisation of several service areas to support children with mental health challenges made since the last reporting period have been successful. These include:

- Learning disability Child and Adolescent Mental Health [CAMHS] service
- Children in Care [CiC] CAMHS service
- Specialist Children and Young People mental health practitioners in primary care

These services are now mobilising at pace with services commencing from January 2024 through to June 2024. The Learning Disability [LD] /CAMHS Service launched on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2024. Measures of success are being developed for the first two service areas (LD CAMHS MoS will be co – produced with Parent Carer Forum [PCF] representatives) which will feed into both the system and the place based integrated SEND dashboards as part of the continuing SEND improvement journey. Delivery and progress are being monitored under both the Frimley ICB SEND and Mental Health Steering groups.



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Delivery against the Frimley ICB SEND Transformation Programme of work is continuing with a focus on the first 2 key priorities of the programme:

- 1) Service Transformation of Integrated Therapies across East Berkshire
- 2) The development of Place Based Integrated SEND Dashboards

A new Designated Clinical Officer [DCO] began on 4 December 2023 and will be leading on some projects within the programme. In addition, Frimley ICB has also appointed a Designated Medical officer for SEND [DMO] who began January 2024. This role is filled by a community pediatrician with specialist neurodevelopmental expertise and the role will support the DCO function. In particular the DMO will lead on the 3<sup>rd</sup> are of priority within the SEND Transformation Programme around Quality Assurance of assessments and Plans and Training for the clinical workforce.

Frimley ICB is currently engaged in detailed planning for 24-25 with a particular focus for the next financial year on our Neurodiversity Services.

### **Joint Commissioning Strategy**

The Joint Commissioning Strategy has been revised in discussion with SBC I commissioners and now aligns to wider Childrens Services commissioning practices. The SEND Commissioner working with the Sufficiency Working Party, that is linked to the Place Planning Board, has identified that around 30-40 places are required for September 2024. Additional places will also be needed in subsequent years.

A new delivery plan is being taken to the February SEND Partnership Board for agreement that is made up of three key elements:

1. Review of current Specialist Resource Provision
2. Additional Alternative Provision placements at Haybrook College and Littledown School
3. Individual capital projects including modular classrooms at Arbour Vale School, an extension to Haybrook College, 2 EYFS Assessment Centres, funding towards additional post 16 places at Windsor Forest Colleges and a programme to update inclusion resources in 9 schools.

### **Preparation for Adulthood**

Although staffing pressures to support the Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Lead has led to a reduction in operational impetus in this area in recent weeks. Once support staff are in place, the operational work will pick up further momentum. Nevertheless, there is now a greater awareness amongst all stakeholders of the importance of preparing for adulthood from the earliest of years and how this must be embedded in the work which is done with all young people in all areas of education, health and social care.

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Parent and carers are now beginning to see a greater emphasis on the importance of planning for adulthood and report that they are satisfied with this focus. Educational settings are being upskilled in order for them to ensure that relevant conversations are had with young people regarding all options available to them post 16. There is also a greater emphasis being placed on the necessity of having such conversations prior to Y9 and providing all settings, including primary, with links to resources to assist them with embedding PfA into the curriculum much earlier. Following a workshop session [PfA.pptx](#) at the SEND Partnership Board a draft Toolkit for PfA [PfA Toolkit.docx](#) is now out for consultation. The new EHCP Template embeds PfA throughout with outcomes at all ages expected to link to the 4 pathway areas regardless of their age.

### **Lived Experiences**

Feedback received by the SEND 0 – 25 Team suggests that whilst families may have historically shared dissatisfaction in the service regarding provision and outcomes for their children the same families report that they are seeing changes in how the team are addressing needs, are feeling like they are being listened to and therefore having their child's needs met. One young man reported back to us *'Thank you for all of your help with setting my online schooling up. So far I have had a warm welcome from Kings Interhigh and have settled in really well. I am enjoying it so far and think this could be good for me and what I should have done a long time ago. thank you for reaching out as I am always up for a chat.'*

Stronger partnership work leading to improved Lived Experiences and better outcomes for our young people with SEND, and in this instance also a CLA, can be seen here. A 8-year-old CLA whose foster placement and school both gave notice subsequently moved to residential placement. The SEND Officer worked alongside the Virtual School and their manager to challenge the local SEND Team to identify a more appropriate placement. The Virtual School reported: *"We had really exhausted all avenues and were just not getting any response. About 3 weeks ago, we all made a concerted effort in a three-pronged "attack", and we finally got a little bit of movement. The long-awaited consultation was sent to our chosen school on 16 May. They returned it on 22 May to their LA, and it was received by your team on 31 May. It was heard at panel yesterday and agreed. The turnaround by SEND has been truly amazing'.*

We are also collating Lived Experience in a variety of ways with a recent emphasis on including the views of children, young people, parents, and carers in every Educational Psychology report.

Whilst these experiences do highlight gaps in adequate service provision historically, more promising is the fact that there are clear improvements in service delivery and therefore lessons learned for future service improvements.

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**Future Support Activities**

Research & Improvement for SEND Excellence [RISE] Partnership

To support the SEND improvement journey, Slough has been receiving support from the RISE Partnership. This is led by the Council for Disabled Children [CDC] supported by the National Development Team for Inclusion [NDTi], the University of Warwick and the Isos Partnership. The next stage of the support is for 2 Workshops. The agreed dates are:

- ✓ 28<sup>th</sup> February. In-Person, Full Day (9.30am-3.00/3.30pm)
- ✓ 20<sup>th</sup> March. Virtual Half-Day. (1.00-4.00pm)

Another session is planned for a desktop review and the local authority has provided a range of data to plan the session. The data that has been provided is:

- Local area SEND scorecard.
- Frimley quarterly return.
- DfE compliance return.
- Latest draft of SEN2 return.

Support from the Local Government Association [LGA]

A further LGA Peer Review is being planned for later in 2024 to evidence the progress made against the recommendations in the first review but, in the meantime, work is planned for March onwards on a Communications Strategy, preparing for a future Local Area inspection and a carrying out a series of multi-agency SEND audits. The audits will include quality assurance of EHC plans using an LGA toolkit as well as case audits to identify where significant interventions were successful (or could have been successful).

A Communications Strategy could include monthly newsletters to all families of Children and Young People [CYP] with an EHC plan on an opt-out basis, blogs from the SEND Partnership Board and SEND Team, information sharing from partners, lived experience case studies and links to other corporate communications.

Planned sessions:

Wed 13/03	10am – 12.30pm	Local Area Inspection / Communications Strategy
	2pm – 4pm	Planning Multi Agency Quality Assurance Audits
Mon 08/04		Support for LANO – Ofsted evidence bank / Lived Experiences

Future sessions:

- ✓ Multi Agency Quality Assurance Audits
- ✓ Follow up to previous LGA report and actions taken.

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<b>WSoA Actions/timescale check</b>		
<b>Are there any actions behind schedule?</b>		Of the 35 actions due for completion at the end of December 2023, 8 were judged as partially complete and therefore rated RED. For each action, mitigations and a new completion date will be agreed at the February SEND Partnership Board.
<b>Action</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Mitigation/remedial action</b>
<b>2.3.1 Review and develop communications and access to case officers</b>	A Communications Charter is in place and the service is receiving regular compliments. A recent Special Voices Information Day provided further evidence that communication is improving. However, although the level of complaints has reduced recently, the majority are still related to failure to respond and poor communication so it was felt that this action could not be judged to be complete.	Further training and support is being provided to case officers regarding communication with families and settings. As part of the additional support package agreed with the LGA, a Communications Strategy is being developed. This action will be complete by the end of April 2024.
<b>3.3.2 Action plan for attendance</b>	It was initially hoped that Capita could draw down school attendance data which would then be built into the data dashboard. However, the most helpful attendance information is held within the "Studybugs" database and so this is now being used by case officers as part of the assessment and annual review process. An attendance dashboard is being developed.	Once the attendance dashboard is in place, the attendance action plan can be co-produced. This will be complete by the end of April 2024.

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<p><b>3.4.1 Action plan for participation</b></p>	<p>Progress in this area has been impacted due to staff absence and the inability to successfully collate relevant data.</p>	<p>The action plan will be devised once data is collected and analysed and key themes are identified in relation to lack of participation. This will include primary areas of SEND, age and potential cultural influences. Work to begin in March with Inclusion Manager, NEET Team, Employability Team CMIE and CME Team to drill down and capture specifics.</p>
<p><b>5.3.1 Multi agency QA Framework</b></p>	<p>There has been a greater focus on improving the quality of EHC plans in recent weeks rather than simply concentrating on increasing the number of plans and timeliness. Training sessions and the Operational Manual have provided guidance and this has been enhanced by the advice received from the DfE adviser who has quality assured ten plans selected at random. A single template is now being used for all plans moving forward and the improved quality of EP advice is raising the overall quality of plans. An updated SEND Quality Assurance Framework is drafted and set to go out to all partners for consultation March 2024.</p>	<p>The reason this has not been completed yet is because the service is receiving support from the LGA in carrying out multi-agency audits. These sessions will use an LGA toolkit and, if this is helpful, this will be included in the wider Childrens Services Quality Assurance Framework. The sessions are arranged for April 2024 so this will be completed before the end of May 2024.</p>
<p><b>5.3.5 Review and strengthen transition review process</b></p>	<p>SEND representatives attend transition forum with health and social care. There has been a strong focus on building the available options for transition pathways which will lead into the review process and developing the skills and knowledge base of post 16 destinations, including a</p>	<p>Following the sign off of the Ordinarily Available Provision there will be a CDP programme to support Teachers/ TA and SENDCO's to embed the transition offer. New SENDCo support meetings to be held on line 1/2 termly to be develop SENDCo day to day skills</p>

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	<p>development of Supported internships and college offers. This work has been necessary to inform the review process in order that families and young people are empowered with choices that are relevant to their individual aspirations.</p>	<p>with a focus on Preparation for adulthood and transition planning. This will be completed by the end of May 2024.</p>
<p><b>6.1.4 Travel Training</b></p>	<p>As part of the PfA Toolkit work the SEND Youth Group were consulted with regarding areas that they would like support with and support to become independent travellers was a key focus.</p> <p>Rolling out a whole new programme of independent travel training takes time and buy in from associated stakeholders and also could potentially require people to be taken away from their day job. Companies have been considered as a commissioned service to deliver the training however given the financial situation the Council is in, this is not an option at present.</p>	<p>Co-development meetings have already taken place with Arbour Vale School, Langley College and the SBC Transport team regarding production of a travel training scheme for all CYP with SEND, not only those attending specialist provision. Further work has begun to commence with Arbour Vale and SBC Transport team to look at the best and most cost-effective options. Arbour Vale are keen to support SBC to further develop this as a model which can be used in Colleges and some Secondary schools as the next phase. This will be complete by the end of April 2024 with a view to a formal launch in September 2024.</p>
<p><b>6.2.1 Transitions process for CYP open to SCF</b></p>	<p>There is stronger partnership work between settings, the SEND Team and the Children with Disabilities (CWD) Team and more latterly the Employability Team meaning we are in a far greater position to prepare our young people for their futures. In consultation with our youth group Together as One we are more aware of the areas they consider to be the most important in</p>	<p>The new EHCP Template has links to PfA pathways regardless of CYP age. The Transition Policy and Process doc, is currently under review and the education section has been reviewed and shared with partners for feedback on their relevant sections. The Preparation for adulthood Toolkit has been drafted and is out for consultation. Once</p>

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	preparation for adulthood. This is crucial in order for us to design appropriate services to support them on their journeys. However, this work is taking longer to complete due to operational staffing issues (long term absence).	this is finalised a further round training and support will be provided to case officers and settings to utilise this within the transition review process. The toolkit will be included in the Operational Manual for SEND Officers, and will be shared on the local offer website. Strong progress is being made in this area, and we expect to complete this by May 24
<b>6.4.5 Review arrangements for direct payments</b>	Further work will be needed by end of financial year to conclude this piece. SBC and SCF financial regulations need to be taken into consideration and this is being picked up as part of a wider review of financial arrangements.	A review of direct payments to identify potential flexible payment options (pre pay cards) and local provider market – will be completed by the end of April 2024 (the original baseline date was the end of December 2023).

<b>Risk Register</b>			
	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
1	Failure to produce EHC plans within statutory timescales means that children and young people do not receive the right support early enough.	Dissatisfied families and children and young people's SEND needs not met. As a result, children and young people do not achieve the best outcomes. Also, possibility of tribunals and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman [LGSCO] complaints.	Additional locum EPs in place and revised SEND statutory processes are maintaining a high level of EHC plans. New panel processes already impacting on the quality of decision making and timeliness.
2	Lack of consistent approach to SEND in mainstream schools around the	Children and young people's SEND needs not met. Increased cost to the council with	Ongoing work to coproduce a new graduated approach for Slough to be launched at

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	graduated approach.	more requests for EHC plans	an Inclusion Conference. Inclusion a focus of Autumn Term Visits.
3	Failure to secure enough non-maintained places for pupils requiring resource provision or a special school.	Children and young people's SEND needs not met. Increased cost to the council with more independent school places needed.	SEND Sufficiency Working Party established and SEND needs added to the Place Planning Board TOR.
4	Failure to complete WSoA actions by the end of May 2024.	Reputational damage to the SEND Service and wider Council. Statutory Notice remains in place.	Improvement Action Plan and project management in place to ensure timescales are kept.
5	Failure to secure the trust and confidence of families in delivering support for their child with SEND	Lack of engagement and lost opportunities for coproduction and joint working.	Working Together Charter in place, new Local Offer website and SEND handbook to be launched at the Special Voices Information Day.
6	Financial risks caused by increasing demand for EHC plans.	The Council has entered into a Safety Valve Agreement (SVA). Therefore, as well as impacting on the overall Council budget position, a significantly higher level of SEND sending could threaten the additional funding being offered by the DfE if the SVA targets are achieved.	As stated in the report, there is a High Needs Block Budget Recovery Plan in place supported by a programme of monitoring and reporting. Currently the Council is on track to achieve the budget position set out in the SVA and the first payment of £10.8m in additional funding has already been received.
7	Recruitment and retention issues due to the SEND service being largely interim.	As stated in the main report, there has been recent turnover in the SEND Case Officer team and this is likely to continue until a permanent team is in place.	A Recruitment and Retention policy is being developed alongside consistent SEND processes and data management to minimise the impact of staff changes.



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**Support received in this reporting period**

<b>Support Activity</b>	The DfE adviser has provided feedback on ten EHC plans RISE Support for SENCo Network
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**Progress on Priorities 1-7**

<b>Priority 1</b>	There are weak arrangements for ensuring effective joint leadership and accountability, self-evaluation and improvement planning at a strategic level across education, health and care services [including considering the high turnover of staff and an area-wide commitment to inclusion].
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**Progress on Key Actions**

Currently all actions in Priority Area 1 are either complete or on track to be complete by the end of May 2024 apart from 1.5.1 - conduct a review of all places and identify gaps in provision in the area to ensure a strategic approach to placing children in the most appropriate setting according to need. This has been deemed Amber because the shortage of special school places in the region has been identified as a risk. This means that, although the sufficiency of places will be assessed and a new more strategic placing policy will be agreed, it might not be possible to find appropriate settings for all children and young people. Currently a low number of Year 6 pupils with an EHC plan have “Special School by Type” in Section I of their plan because we are still looking to commission the right school.

At secondary the overlap of SEND and behaviour remains a concern and schools who currently rely on AP are hoping for a positive outcome to ongoing discussions. This is also a potential barrier to all young people being placed appropriately.

The SEND Partnership Board has been fully established since early in 2023 and is chaired by the Director of Childrens Services. It includes the SEND Commissioner, the Elected Member for Education, health, social care, early years, schools and parent/carer partners. The Board has developed a SEF based on advice from the DfE adviser together with a data dashboard that links to social care and health databases. The impact of the Board is clear in terms of the quality of monitoring information and the growing confidence that SEND in Slough is improving.

One significant change since the last monitoring report is that the number of school leaders on the Partnership Board has been increased to ensure that there is a broader representation. As well as a Nursery and College representative there are an academy mainstream, maintained mainstream and a special school headteacher for the primary and secondary phases.

The SEND and Inclusion Strategy 21-24 was used to inform the Capacity and Risk Evaluation meetings in the Autumn term. This included a supplementary Inclusion Questionnaire which has provided a range of evidence about inclusion in Slough schools. Another 2 questionnaires were circulated to help schools audit their provisions and a SENDCO questionnaire focusing on their knowledge of SEND legislation and the graduated Approach and how they are delivering this within their

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settings. Evidence of best practice in inclusion also informed the Inclusion Conference in January.

The use of data is covered more fully in Priority Area 3 but a range of KPIs have been selected and will be presented to the SEND Partnership Board at the February meeting. These will help to inform future monitoring, target setting and priority action planning.

SEND reports are brought to the Getting to Good Board every other monthly meeting and every quarter to full Cabinet. This ensures that Council leaders have good knowledge of the improvement journey. However, it has also been agreed that this will be one of the areas considered by the Council scrutiny committee.

The impact of the Board and the SEND Improvement Action Plan is clear in the progress that has been made in completing actions in the WSoA. As stated in the "Where Are We Now" section above.

#### Inclusion in Schools

From a SENDCO Conference in January supported by the Council for Disabled Children, a draft Slough Ordinarily Available Provision document has been co-produced and is currently being circulated to other stakeholders for their contributions and feedback. Communication and cooperation between the Inclusion Early Years Teams and education departments within Slough and the SENDCO's has greatly improved with SENDCO Network meetings, Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) meetings being well attended, with over 30 SENDCO's attending the SENDCO Network meetings on a regular basis. In addition, there are Resource Base meetings which focus on sharing of good practice.

There are regular Inclusion panels where schools and other agencies meet to discuss identified pupils where they feel they have exhausted their own knowledge base. In addition, the Early Years Team and the Inclusion Advisory Teachers are available to support individual pupils, classes and whole school / Units' advice to support Inclusion. Slough Inclusion offers mentoring to SENDCO's who are struggling and ad hoc meetings to discuss any concerns / difficulties that might have arisen. SENDCO's receive regular email updates regarding CPD, new reports etc.

SENDCO's are now working together to address areas of weakness. For example they are addressing the high turnover of TA's in schools and with Slough have devised a series of training sessions they wish Slough to deliver.

#### Preparation for Adulthood

By listening to our families and children and young people we are better equipped to ensure that they transition into adulthood appropriately supported and are being afforded maximum life chances in all areas (further education/employment,

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community inclusion, good health and independence). For each young person this will look very different. However, only by learning what they want to be supported with and by whom can we begin to support them and their families to make this happen. The stronger partnership work between settings, the SEND Team and the Children with Disabilities (CWD) Team and more latterly the Employability Team means we are in a far greater position to prepare our young people for their futures. In consultation with our youth group Together as One we are more aware of the areas they consider to be the most important in preparation for adulthood. This is crucial in order for us to design appropriate services to support them on their journeys. Their feedback can be found here [Feedback for Adele.pdf](#).

The new EHCP Template embeds PfA throughout with outcomes at all ages expected to link to the 4 pathway areas regardless of the CYP age. Training is scheduled to support this with the SEND Team to embed PfA into their writing of EHC Plans and the work they do with families.

A more joined up strategic approach to working with the employability team, where children's services will have a seat on the steering group, thus enabling us to work with DWP and the Chamber of Commerce.



parent  
questionnaire redact

As we can see from the questionnaire above, this is a key concern of parents, to know that there will be conversations around transition (not only into adult services where appropriate) and options available to their child in the future. It is of course also pleasing to see their overall satisfaction with the education being received.

The new EHCP Template has links to PfA pathways regardless of the child or young person's age. The Transition Policy and Process document is currently under review and the education section has been reviewed and shared with partners for feedback on their relevant sections.

### **Evidence of Impact**

A consultant headteacher coordinates the Autumn Term Capacity and Risk Visits that was completed by 50 out of 51 schools, has provided feedback to the Slough Education Partnership Board regarding the Inclusion Questionnaire. He found that the question responses "were almost universally positive!" about improvements in the SEND Service. There was "strong acknowledgement that LA processes have improved" although "this is caveated by comments around the low bar this is being judged against". This supports the Local Authority [LA] view that SEND Services have significantly improved but that there is a long way to go.

In their responses to the Inclusion Questionnaire completed as part of the Autumn Term Capacity and Risk Visits to all schools, schools reported that "new

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applications are moving through the system well” but that backlog cases are having significant implications on schools.

School feedback in the Inclusion Questionnaire was positive about the support given to young people receiving SEND Support and provided examples of schools meeting more complex needs by creating additional resource areas. However, there was concern that young people waiting for EHC plans that are over the statutory timeline are having a detrimental impact on teaching and school budgets.

The impact of an increased awareness of a graduated approach and robust Assessment process is now beginning to be reflected through the data. Since November there have been no Band 1 or 2 EHC’s issued. This is compared with 5 between August and the end of October 23. Therefore, this suggests that schools are being more inclusive.

There is a raised awareness amongst all stakeholders on the importance of Preparation for Adulthood from the earliest of years and how this must be embedded in the work of all partners. Parent carers are reporting that they are seeing this as an improved focus. A greater number of settings are ensuring that relevant conversations are had with young people regarding post 16 options available to them. YP are becoming more aware of a wider range of opportunities relating to training available to them and are being directed where to seek advice.

CYP and their families report increased levels of satisfaction with the local offer. CYP and their families are confident that the post-16 offer meets the needs of SEND students and that their views are heard and taken into account.

**Key Next Steps**

- A ‘Preparation for Adulthood Toolkit’ has been drafted and is out for consultation, however this is a dynamic document and will reflect ongoing changes nationally and locally.
- Future priorities include a programme to review and strengthen access to work experience, supported internship and employment opportunities from Yr10 onwards and establishing a multi- agency Transition Pathways Group this has been operational for some months to enable effective joint commissioning and strategic implementation of the PfA Toolkit.
- Additional training and specialist advice on creating ‘inclusive classrooms’ at primary school to tackle pupils with significant additional needs would be appreciated by school leaders.

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<b>Priority 2</b>	The overlooked voice of the children and young people with SEND and their families and consequent lack of understanding of their lived experiences and the lack of readily available, helpful and accurate information in this regard.
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**Progress on key actions**

Currently all actions in Priority Area 2 are either complete or on track to be complete by the end of May 2024 apart from 2.3.1 - review and develop systems to ensure parents/carers have appropriate access to their case worker and there are clear expectations around communication and timeliness of response. This was judged to be Red in December 2023 because, although a Communications Charter is in now in place, the level of complaints is still too high and the majority are still related to failure to respond and poor communication. As a result, additional training and support is being provided to case officers regarding communication. As part of the additional support package agreed with the LGA, a Communications Strategy is being developed and will be complete by May 2024.

Greater awareness of the importance of lived experiences and the voices of children, young people and parent carers is now seen as business as usual by all partners. The recognition of its importance and the reasons why it is important has been shared widely and will continue to be. All officers across the council are being encouraged to share experiences that they are aware of and celebrations of good practice are shared on the Local Offer website. Where poor experiences have been had, we are using them to drive service improvement. Monthly meetings will be held where key SBC and health partners will be asked to focus on key areas of weakness highlighted by the shared lived experiences with the question raised of 'what can be done to address this...?'.

Greater partnership working between schools, the virtual school ([Slough Information and Services Guide | Fantastic feedback from Virtual School \(sloughfamilyandcommunityservices.org.uk\)](https://www.sloughfamilyandcommunityservices.org.uk)) the SEND Team and health means that when lived experiences are being shared stakeholders are in a better position to come together to resolve issues as appropriate. The development and redesign of key SEND health provisions has consulted with families and carers to draw on lived experience to inform the transformation work.

There are many ways which we are collating evidence demonstrating we are actively seeking the views and feedback of our families. The voices of children and young people were heard at SEND Strategic Partnership Board (16/1/24) and will continue to be a regular feature with more young people joining us in March. The Participation Officer is now since a Board member which will assist in ensuring we are aware of the concerns raised by YP. DFN Project SEARCH Case Studies, videos and interviews to be shared and shared on LO. In the new Learning Disability and CAMHS service launched in February, families and carers are co-

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producing the Measures of Success by which we will measure impact. For the work transforming the Integrated Therapies service, we have conducted a full survey seeking the lived experience of our families which will inform the new service design.

We are hearing directly from parents, carers and children and young people at strategic and operational levels in any medium which suits them. We have witnessed great participation from young people at the SEND Strategic Partnership Board and have received completed case studies from both parent carers and young people. All feedback received is collated centrally as are case studies.

Each Slough school now has an agreed link officer and hearing directly from schools that their experience with SBC SEND services has greatly improved means essentially that we are helping to improve the outcomes of young people with SEND, *'Dear Len and Bryn, I hope you are well. I am emailing today to say how lovely it has been to work with the Slough Borough Council SEND team since September 2023. The ability to make a phone call knowing the team will call back within that day, has made a world of difference to my mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, working with Sam, Natalie, Jo and Pav has given me tremendous support and has added immensely to my professional development. I have worked in Slough, as a SENDCO, since January 2021, and I have not had this support in this way since I started. Thank you so much.'*

**Evidence of impact**

A number of case studies have been collected that evidence an improvement in how stakeholders are being treated and that this is raising outcomes for children and young people.

Since a new telephony service for the SEND 0 – 25 Team stakeholders report improved access to the Team and calls logs support this view. As well as logging each call, an outline of the nature of the query, the actions to be taken, the officers to undertake the action and any follow-up is recorded. The telephone system still requires further improvements however and needs to be fully embedded.

Feedback from schools supports the view that the introduction of link SEND Officers, settings know who to liaise directly with regarding any queries and this is working well with schools feeding back an improvement in communication overall in the Capacity and Risk Questionnaire.

Since the Communications Charter was introduced, the service has received a higher level of compliments, and these are regular shared at the Childrens Services weekly briefing. A recent Special Voices Information Day provided further evidence that communication is improving. However, although the level of complaints has reduced recently, the majority are still related to failure to respond and poor communication which show that there is still dissatisfaction amongst some partners.

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The current high turnover of case officers, however, has impacted on the relationships that were previously being built between schools and officers. This means that outcomes are not as good as expected and therefore successful communication has declined.

The new Local Offer website has been launched and work is ongoing to identify gaps and, if necessary, commission services to provide support that is required but not currently available. This will be business as usual work carried out as agreed by the Local Offer Working Party that contains a range of stakeholders.

**Key next steps**

- All LA Officers will continue to be encouraged to capture Lived Experience in the way which is most accessible to the learner and/or their family and these will be centrally collated. Officers will be encouraged to share the lived experience email address with families for them to report their feedback directly. These findings will be analysed, reported on, and acted on as appropriate.
- The Team will have greater capacity and more stability meaning that all partners will know who to go to regarding specific queries or children and young people.
- The telephone system will be further streamlined and fully embedded. Any complaints referencing communication will be looked at in detail and issues addressed.
- Further training and support is being provided to case officers regarding communication with families and settings.
- As part of the additional support package agreed with the LGA, a Communications Strategy is being drafted.

<b>Priority 3</b>	There is a lack of effective use of meaningful performance information to inform the area’s strategy and planning, as well as to evaluate its effectiveness.
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**Progress on key actions**

All the actions in this area have been completed or are rated as Green apart from 3.3.2 – draw up and implement an action plan to reduce absences and 3.4.1 – develop an action plan to increase participation for children and young people with SEND.

Use of data is now a clear strength in the SEND Strategic oversight processes with an upgraded Self Evaluation Framework and a data dashboard that informs the work of the SEND Partnership Board. The impact of the Case Tracking System has helped to ensure that Capita is being used and populated more accurately the

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service is in a much stronger position to monitor the EHC plan cohort and to identify the right interventions and other actions that are required. The original plan was that Capita would draw down school attendance data which would then be built into the data dashboard. However, analysis and conversations with schools revealed that the most helpful attendance information is held within the “Studybugs” database. Therefore, “Studybugs” data is now being used by case officers as part of the assessment and annual review process and an attendance dashboard is being developed. An attendance action plan that identifies the particular cohort of children and young people to be targeted and the interventions to be used will be developed once the attendance dashboard is in place. This will be completed by the end of April 2024

Progress in the development of a participation action plan has been impacted due to staff absence and the inability to successfully collate relevant data. The action plan will be devised once data is collected and analysed and key themes are identified in relation to lack of participation. This will include primary areas of SEND, age and potential cultural influences. Work to begin in March with Inclusion Manager, NEET Team, Employability Team CMIE and CME Team to drill down and capture specifics.

**Evidence of impact**

Slough SEND Services’ use of performance data is becoming a clear strength in terms of monitoring performance, identifying blockages in the system and setting challenging targets for improvement. A data dashboard has been developed in line with the areas of weakness identified by the CDC / Ofsted inspection, the SEND Green Paper and the latest Local Area Inspection Framework. This was further developed using advice and examples of good practice from the DfE adviser. The dashboard has been benchmarked against the other East Berkshire local authorities as well as Frimley ICB. We have been contacted by the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire group who would like to learn from our use of data. Therefore, what was an area of weakness in the inspection is now being used as a regional example of good practice.

The SEND Sufficiency Working Party and analysis of the current EHC plan cohort is now systematically identifying and addressing gaps in current provision and informing the revised joint commissioning strategy to meet future demands. This includes integrated therapies to address the existing waiting lists for occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.

The case tracking system is having a clear impact in supporting day-to-day decision making within the SEND Statutory 0-25 Team and is a key factor in the improvement in performance. This system allows triaging of cases as well as monitoring the performance of individual case officers. The refreshing of the Capita case management information is bringing the two data sets in line with each other.



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**Key next steps**

A range of additional KPIs are being built into the data dashboard relating to annual reviews, decisions to carry out an EP assessment and completing the assessment within timescales, conversion rate from draft EHC plans to final plans, attendance for SEND pupils and health data.

Prioritising lived experiences data will remain a focus to ensure that the impact of improvements is making a difference to children and young people with SEND.

Schools have raised concerns about pupils joining Reception classes with more complex needs that were previously unidentified or where the child had not attended Nursery. The Early Years Inclusion Officers have begun to track the current Reception and year 1 cohorts and have so far discovered that only 17 of the 118 pupils with an EHC plan had previously not attended an early years setting. However, further tracking will consider new applications for an EHC Needs Assessment for this cohort over the next few terms to identify how many young people fall into this category. This will be compared to 9–12-month and 2-year review data where early identification suggests support is required to meet developmental milestones. Currently the Early Years team is ensuring that the SEND spreadsheet and the October census data aligns accurately.

**Priority 4**

There are limited opportunities for parents, carers and children and young people with SEND to be involved in planning and reviewing area services.

**Progress on key actions**

All the actions in Priority Area 4 are either complete or on track to complete by the agreed date.

Only 1 action was due to be complete since the last monitoring report and this was to ensure that there is increased representation on existing forums that reflect the local population.

The influence of the Parent Carer Forum, Special Voices, has increased with more members attending meetings and their surveys being used as part of the data monitoring programme. Participation groups run by youth officers and participation officers are publicised on the Local Offer. Participation People, Making Participation Work, and Kids charities are working together with Slough Borough Council and Slough Children First and 'Together as One' to ensure greater opportunities for children and young people as well as their families to participate.

Posters have been created with a unique Lived Experience email address, to be distributed across the Borough, in settings, leisure centres and health centres etc.

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and are included in information which goes out to families with statutory process information for new ECHNA requests.

As reported in the last monitoring report, the redesign of the Local Offer Website was an example of effective co-production with children, young people and parent/carers (Special Voices).

The participation of children and young people has been further enhanced by the development of the SEND communications policy drafted and Training scheduled for all SEND officers to embed good practice in line with education directorate policies with the aim of ensuring issues are dealt with before they reach the stage of formal complaint. The overhaul of the SEND Telephony system together with the new duty rota established in October 2023 ensures that all calls into the service are logged and a record kept of actions taken and timeliness of response.

Key SEND Service staff attend SENCO network meetings and there are regular information sharing sessions with education settings and parent carers to ensure the SEND Team is transparent and accessible to schools and parents. Having up to date and accurate information about the progress made by the SEND 0-25 Statutory services is vital if stakeholders are going to be involved in strategic priority setting.

**Evidence of Impact**

Children and young people are now more involved in the EHC plan assessment and drafting process since key outward contact points were built into the Standard Operating Procedures. Feedback from families supports the view that they are better informed of the ECHNA progress and that their views are more included in the draft and final EHC plan.

Draft SEND Quality Assurance Framework includes requirement for families to be involved in the multi-agency audit process to provide valuable insight into the quality of EHCPs from their perspective and an opportunity for them to influence decisions on service improvement and delivery that affect their lives.

Information about SENDIASS is prominent on the Local Offer website. Contact information for SENDIASS is included in all standard letters throughout the Education Health and Care Needs Assessment [ECHNA] and Annual review processes and within information sent to families of CYP applying for new ECHNA.

Attendance of children and young people as well as parent/carers at SEND Partnership Board meetings.

“Special Voices” parent-carer feedback gathered regularly and shared with key decision-makers. Since the last monitoring visit, Special Voices have conducted a further survey that found that half of families believed that the education for their child had improved over the last four months. Similar feedback has been received

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from SENCos and other school leaders. However, as stated above, the level of complaints about communication are still too high.

**Key next steps**

- Schools are reporting the SEND Team are more accessible and improved relationships with SEND Officers  
*“Dear Natalie, I just wanted to say how refreshing it was to discuss our SEND concerns with you on Friday. It was the first meeting that I have come away feeling that things for our most vulnerable children were finally being sorted and concerns were being listened to. I understand there is a long way to go, but for me it is a good start. Thank you again.”*
- Evidence [Case Study Examples](#) clearly outline that stakeholders report an improvement in how they are being treated and thus outcomes are better for young people.
- The Local Offer website will be reviewed by the working party which includes stakeholders.
- Young people and parent-carer representatives will be members of the new Strategic Transition Group.
- A local area, multi-agency attended, ‘Youth Voice’ conference will be held in the new year.
- Consultation with parents and YP around schools’ strategies.
- Autism course [4 sessions] to be delivered to parents within schools.
- “DFN Project Search”. Supported Internship Model. Presentation for parent-carers and to young people from “Together as One” and “The Autism Group”.

<b>Priority 5</b>	The timeliness with which EHC plans are produced and updated, particularly nearing transition points, and the absence of systematic processes for the quality assurance of EHC plans.
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**Progress on key actions**

Since the last WsoA monitoring report, two actions within Priority Area 5 have been rated as Red because they were not fully complete by January 2024. These were 5.3.1 – establish a multi-agency Quality Assurance Framework and 5.3.5 – review and strengthen transition review processes.

An updated Quality Assurance framework for SEND has been drafted and is set to go out to all partners for consideration and comment by March 2024. A series of multi-agency SEND audits has been planned for March 2024 onwards. The reason this has not been judged as completed yet is because the service is waiting to

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receive support from the LGA in carrying out multi-agency audits. These sessions will use an LGA toolkit and, if this is helpful, this will be included in the wider Childrens Services Quality Assurance Framework. Nevertheless, there has been a greater focus on improving the quality of EHC plans in recent weeks rather than simply concentrating on increasing the number of plans and timeliness. Training sessions and the Operational Manual have provided guidance and this has been enhanced by the advice received from the DfE adviser who has quality assured ten plans selected at random.

All transition reviews have been completed for Y-1, Y2, and Y6 by the statutory deadline of February 15th. There is work still to be done to improve monitoring and quality of process in this area. The annual review paperwork and guidance for settings (including transition review guidance) has been updated. SEND representatives now attend the transition forum in order to discuss potential young people who may need to transition into ASC and a Transition Pathways Group has been operational since November in order to further strengthen partnership work and to strategically look to find ways to further support those young people who are approaching transition.

**Other key actions**

The improved level of Educational Psychology [EP] assessments and Education, Health and Care [EHC] plans being finalised or sent out as drafts reported in November has been maintained (see Appendix 1 for updated data). Key factors behind this improvement are the accuracy of decision making by the EHC panel, the impact of the training and support for case officers, maintaining a strong interim EP team and the monitoring and triaging that has been possible using the new case tracker. As a result of the increasing level of EHC plans being completed, the backlog is beginning to reduce slowly. The level of plans being completed will need to improve further since it will take more than a year at the current rate to clear the backlog.

In November we reported on the appointment of a highly experienced Principal Education Psychologist [PEP] and the securing of additional interim educational psychologist [EP] capacity. The increased level of EP assessments completed each month has remained at a much higher level than in the first months of 2023. The backlog of unallocated assessments that stood at 130 in June 2023, and which had reduced to eighty by November, has now largely been removed so the team are now focused on meeting ongoing requests within statutory timescales. This is a significant achievement by the PEP and the EP Service.

Maintaining a stable team of case officers has been identified as a significant strength and so it needs to be flagged as a risk that five officers have given notice and need to be replaced. However, interviews are already on going and we are confident

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that we will recruit officers who will take us to the next stage of our SEND improvement journey.

Frimley ICB appointed a Designated Medical officer for SEND (DMO) who took up their post in January 2024 and will lead Quality Assurance of health contribution to Assessments and Plans.

The joint weekly meetings of all staff run by the DCS and Senior Management bring over 100 staff together, on screen, to share issues and successes, good practice and new developments, welcome new people and relay positive service outcomes now goes a very long way to SBC and SCF working together as one for the benefit of parents, carers and importantly young people. It sets the tone for positive activities that benefit all.

The continued access, read only, for SEND 0-25 Case Work Officers and Senior Officers in Education to Social Care young people records to get up-to-date information etc. has been game changing for the SEND0-25 Team. This access speeds up the 20-week process with contextual pertinent information enabling learning outcomes to be written with wider, relevant, up to date information. Whilst meetings with Social workers about a young person's needs happen in the run up and before an EHCP may be issued, the understanding from notes etc. and gives a very good profile of a young person to aid the pen picture of them in the EHCP. It also alerts staff in SEND 0-25 to be sensitive to the position that a young person is in and enables SEND staff to speak to the right person, at the right time about that young person to inform the EHCP process. It is a very good example of SBC and SCF working together in a practical and pragmatic way to support young people who have needs that are special. Parents and Carers can see and hear us working together whilst both deliver their statutory duties rather than two services: hopefully one time telling their story about the same young person.

SEND 0-25 are now located on the same floor in Observatory House as SCF colleagues. They meet and interact having joint meetings and sharing problems and successes. This relationship then transgresses to virtual meetings making them more effective as people have met in person: feel in one Team helping to solve issues. Having a shared area, Canteen area and meeting through the building creates a positive work and joined up culture.

A further SEND data dashboard to support additional live data reporting is in development with Capita MIS partners. The live data trackers allow for additional focus on KPIs and performance tracking during supervision and all officers receive regular supervision from SEND Team Managers.

A SENDCO Conference/ Workshop regarding the Year 6 Slough Transition offer was held on 10th January with the CDC in attendance. Further SENDCo Network meetings to continue every 1/2 term with senior SEND staff in attendance.

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**Evidence of impact**

In January 2023 5 plans were finalised compared with 28 in January 2024 (see Appendix 1 for further data). Overall, in the 6 months from January 2023 to June 2023 only 37 EHCPs were completed within the 20 statutory timescales compared to 123 completed between September 2023 and January 2024. In their responses to the Inclusion Questionnaire completed as part of the Autumn Term Capacity and Risk Visits to all schools, schools reported that “new applications are moving through the system well”.

The cumulative percentage of EHC plans that have been completed within the twenty-week statutory timescale has also risen consistently throughout 2023 and ended the year at 17.6% compared to 11% in 2022. Although this is well below national averages, the inclusion of backlog cases in these figures is masking the performance of the team for new cases.

The live case tracking systems are having a clear impact in supporting day-to-day decision making within the SEND Statutory 0-25 Team and is a key factor in the improvement in performance. This coupled with the timely return of EP reports is meaning that the SEND 0-25 Statutory Team have maintained a consistently higher level of EHC plans finalised monthly as well as drafts written and sent out since July 2023.

Panel processes have been reviewed and quality assured by the DfE adviser to ensure that decision making is effective and in line with the SEND Code of Practice. Social Care and Health representatives sit on SEND panel, and the Capita MIS professionals’ portal will clarify and streamline Social Care and health contribution to the EHCNA process.

The DfE adviser has also quality assured a range of EHC plans selected at random. Although only one was judged to be inadequate, generally they were too long and there was not a standard template for all ten plans. This feedback has already been fed into training for case officers and will be a focus for the multi-agency audits. A single template is now being used for all plans moving forward and the improved quality of EP advice is raising the overall quality of plans. An updated SEND Quality Assurance Framework is drafted and set to go out to all partners for consultation March 2024.

A complete overhaul of the Standard Operating Procedure for EHCNA has been developed and incorporated as part of the Operational Manual. A live Assessment Case Tracking system has been developed and is now fully embedded and running in tandem with the Management Information System [MIS].

A similar system for annual review tracking has been recently implemented which incorporates the transition review process, and now this requires a period of further embedding. The Standard Operating Procedures for annual reviews has been

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overhauled and updated in the Operational Manual. This includes a focus on the transition review process.

**Key next steps**

- The SEND 0-25 Statutory team are now in active development with Capita MIS partners to create an Online Parent and professional Portals for submission of key information for the ECHNA process. This is due for initial testing by April 2024 with a view to piloting with a sample group of parents and professionals in May 2024.
- A complete benchmarking of SEND team structure against regional and national LA comparatives will inform the development of updated recruitment and retention policies for both the EP and SEND services. It is anticipated that this will be able to be completed by May 24 once the SBC-wide permanent workforce restructure work has been completed.
- Fully embed the new annual reviews Standard Operating Procedure and case tracker.
- Updated Quality Assurance framework to go out to all partners for consultation March 2024. Multi-agency audits to take place supported by the LGA including an EHC plan Quality Assurance Toolkit.
- Update Multiagency SEND working agreement between Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB), Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT), Solutions 4 Health, Achieving for Children, Frimley Park NHS Foundation Trust (FHFT), Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Slough Borough Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council, in respect of operational arrangements for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) aged 0 to 25 years.

<b>Priority 6</b>	The absence of social care considerations in EHC plans, for children and young people not known to children’s social care, and in services in the area, including the lack of age-appropriate social opportunities for children and young people and limited offer of short-break or respite services for parents and carers.
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**Progress on key actions**

Three actions within Priority Area 6 were judged to be Red rated in January 2024 because they were only partially completed. Two relate to Preparation for Adulthood, 6.1.4 – develop and review travel training and 6.2.1 review the current transitions process to ensure effective preparation for life as an adult.

Although progress has been made against both these PfA actions, staffing issues (long term absence of the PFA Support Officer) mean that both these actions have only been partially achieved. SEND representatives attend transition forum with

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health and social care and there is a strong focus on building the available options for transition pathways. The review process is being reviewed against these options and developing the skills and knowledge base of post 16 destinations, including a development of Supported internships and College offers. Once the review process is updated, families and young people will be more empowered with choices that are relevant to their individual aspirations.

Following the sign off of the Ordinarily Available Provision there will be a CDP programme to support Teachers / teaching assistants and SENDCO's to embed the transition offer and develop day to day skills on Preparation for adulthood and transition planning. This will be completed by the end of May 2024. A draft Toolkit for PfA is now out for consultation. This will provide all settings, including primary, with links to resources to assist them with embedding PfA into the curriculum, guidance to signpost and support pupils and their families to courses they are interested as well as supported internships and apprenticeships.

Regarding travel training, the SBC Home to School Travel Team are moving into the People (Education) team as part of the restructure which needs to happen first. Significant progress has been made as part of the PfA Toolkit work the SEND Youth Group were consulted with regarding areas that they would like support with and support to become independent travellers was a key focus.

Co-development meetings have already taken place with Arbour Vale School, Langley College and the SBC Transport team regarding production of a travel training scheme for all CYP with SEND. Companies have been considered as a commissioned service to deliver the training, however given the financial situation the Council is in, this is not an option at present. Further work has begun to commence with Arbour Vale and SBC Transport team to look at the best and most cost-effective options. This will be complete by the end of April 2024 with a view to a formal launch in September 2024.

The other action, rated as Red in January 2024, was 6.4.5 - review direct payments arrangements with adult services and the CCG. Further work will be needed by end of financial year to conclude this work because all financial procedures are being reviewed and this will be included a part of the wider financial review. A review of direct payments to identify potential flexible payment options (such as pre pay cards) and to look at the wider local provider market, will be completed by the end of April 2024 (the original baseline date was the end of December 2023). This will ensure that SBC and Slough Childrens First financial regulations are taken into consideration and that the SEND Direct Payments Policy will fit within the wider financial procedures.

Other progress made under Priority Area 6 includes the creation of a Strategic Group to support and oversee transition to adulthood that meets quarterly – co-chaired by the Directors for Adult Social Care and Children' Social Care. Terms of Reference and membership have been agreed and this will ensure that this area maintains a high focus moving forward as business as usual.



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As stated above in this report, a new Participation strategy has been agreed by Cabinet. A participation leads group meets regularly and an operational delivery group is in place. Participation People have been commissioned to support for Children in Care and Care Experienced young people. SEND participation is increasingly evident and will help to inform transition to adulthood..

Virtual School will continue to support education and social care processes as part of the wider duties to children with a social worker

Sufficiency of accommodation for care experienced young people is being addressed in the sufficiency strategy – developing improved relationships with colleagues in Housing and we have a commissioning Lead who has led significant work to improve provider relationships which is maturing our relationship with the market.

A Housing group has been agreed with the Director of Housing in recent Getting to Good board and this will support the mapping of housing needs for care experienced young people.

The Place Planning Board remit has been widened to include post 16 places and has identified a need for additional capacity. The local authority has worked on a delivery plan with the Windsor Forest College group that provides the majority of post 16 places to ensure that the capacity, and the breadth of curriculum offer, is improved. To support this the SEND 0-05 Capital Programme has allocated £300k towards the final finish of a new Block at the College.

### **Evidence of Impact**

The stronger partnership work between settings, the SEND Team and the Children with Disabilities (CWD) Team and more latterly the Employability Team means we are in a far greater position to prepare our young people for their futures. In consultation with our youth group Together as One we are more aware of the areas they consider to be the most important in preparation for adulthood. This is crucial in order for us to design appropriate services to support them on their journeys. Their feedback can be found here [Feedback for Adele.pdf](#).

Joint working between social care, health and SEND on placement issues evidence that cross over has become increasingly the norm, with several examples, including Spend to Save options.

Good quality short breaks continue to be provided and the rate of and type of provision continues to be sustained and exceeded in some areas. Direct payments are already being used (see table below)

Month	Direct Payments	Short Breaks (Targeted Local Offer)	Short Breaks (Specialist Packages of Care)
Feb 23	24	247	55
Mar 23	25	297	55

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Apr 23	26	263	56
May 23	26	256	58
Jun 23	25	244	62
Jul 23	26	268	59
Aug 23	26	300	57
Sep 23	26	147	57
Oct 23	26	238	59
Nov 23	26	259	56
Dec 23	23	143	46
Jan 24	24	270	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>2932</b>	<b>671</b>

Shared budget on provisions with Social Care, NHS and SEND 0-25 can be evidenced and are increasingly sought. There is discussion to evidence Value For Money by all agencies when they meet. SEND 0-25 have not placed any children in Out of Area Placements since 15th March 2023.

As stated elsewhere in the report, SEND officers have access to Social Care systems and EHCP plans benefit from Social Care advice and real-time information. A maturing professional relationship between social care and education under the One Service ethos – Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving.

Joint working around commissioning is becoming the norm whilst a joint strategy is being developed by the Commissioning teams in both Education and Social Care, to include a more robust approach to shared funding with the ICB.

CYP and their families are confident that the post-16 offer meets the needs of SEND students and that their views are heard and taken into account.

Schools have stated that their experience with SEND services around supporting the transition process has greatly improved: *“Thank you and the Team for today, it was really useful and am looking forward to hearing possible solutions for my current yr 9 cohort to access the ks4 courses that would benefit them best!”*

### **Key Next Steps**

- As part of the new Joint Commissioning Strategic Approach, accommodation and support arrangements for CYP with SEND aged 16–25 will be reviewed by the end of April 2024.
- Joint Housing Panel for Children in our care and care experienced young people will form in February 24.
- Complete the review of direct payments to identify potential flexible payment options (prepay cards) and local provider market – by end April 2024 (this is change from end Dec 2023).
- Employability Team to speak to Special Voices, the SEND Team and at the SENCo conference.

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<b>Priority 7</b>	There is inequitable access to SALT and OT services, excessive waiting lists and waiting times and the absence of a dysphagia service for those aged five and over.
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**Progress on key actions**

All the actions under Priority 7 are now complete and moved to business as usual (although evidence of impact may be needed before some are signed off). The key areas of progress since the last WSoA update in November 23 are described below:

Senior Health representatives continue to have representation in the SEND Partnership Board, SEND 0-25 Panels and triaging decisions.

Scoping of a service for children and young people aged over five who are likely to require dysphagia [eating and drinking support] has been carried out, SLA has now been signed and Arbor Vale School are managing the service across both Special [and mainstream provision if required]. Full reporting against the new provision will be available for the next WSoA update but early headlines are as follows:

Sustained and focused implementation of the Occupational Therapy [OT] Plan to keep waiting times reduced whilst transformation plan for Integrated Therapies continues. There are still long waits for an OT assessment across the South East. However, in Slough there are no breaches of over 53 weeks in Q3. There has been a slight increase in Triage time this quarter, which is currently between 2-3 weeks for the past quarter. An increased level of vacancies in OT is a challenge and there is continued difficulty with recruitment given the national shortage of qualified Occupational Therapists. We are using a skill mix to maximise benefit to our service users alongside the continued development and use of virtual technologies to maximise the reach as well as empower users to be able to self-manage where appropriate. The service continues its recruitment efforts as well as continuing to seek interim support from NHSP. We have robust staff supervision in place with a focus on supporting wellbeing to ensure we retain and look after the skilled experienced staff that we currently have.

Continuing signposting for “Waiting Well” - Increased signposting and support for those who are waiting well is now live. BHFT Children and Young People’s Integrated Therapies [CYPIT] live toolkit menu went live on the Frimley Healthier Together platform and was added to Slough Local offer. The resource was evaluated, feedback captured and reviewed in July 2023 and version 2 has incorporated the feedback for further improvements. A new resource to provide information, universal advice and support for concerns about handwriting has been developed and is going live in February 2024.

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**Impact**

Quarter 3 data shows there has been a marked increase in assessment requests for Slough (with consistently high percentage of these Not Known to service – 62%). However, the overall compliance rate has consistently improved and now stands at **81% compliance** within 6 weeks as opposed to 61% in Q2. This has largely been due to an improvement in administration, communication with partners and countermeasures put in place to improve overall processes with the handling of EHCA requests.

New Dysphagia service has now been launched which will greatly support children and young people and their families.

Cohesive and consistent multi-agency working leads to improved decision making and planning processes to better meet the needs of CYP in a timely way.

The continuing reduction in wait times for children and young people and their families in Slough means they are not struggling for longer than they need to with everyday activities such as being able to focus on a classroom at school. The small numbers that are waiting are offered interim support and signposting.

All children and young people with EHC plans within the 17 mainstream schools covered by the current commissioned contract with BHFT have now been seen for a review/up-to-date assessment of their needs.

All children and young people that attend Arbour Vale School and have identified speech and language therapy needs on their EHC plan have been seen and had their needs reviewed/reassessed. Action completed – backlog identified through

Implement OT action plan in place aimed at reducing waiting times for assessment for routine referrals to a maximum wait of 12 months. Q3 data shows that 100% of Slough Children were assessed within 12 months which achieves the stretch target. We will continue with our action plan with a focus on maintaining achievements and improving where possible.

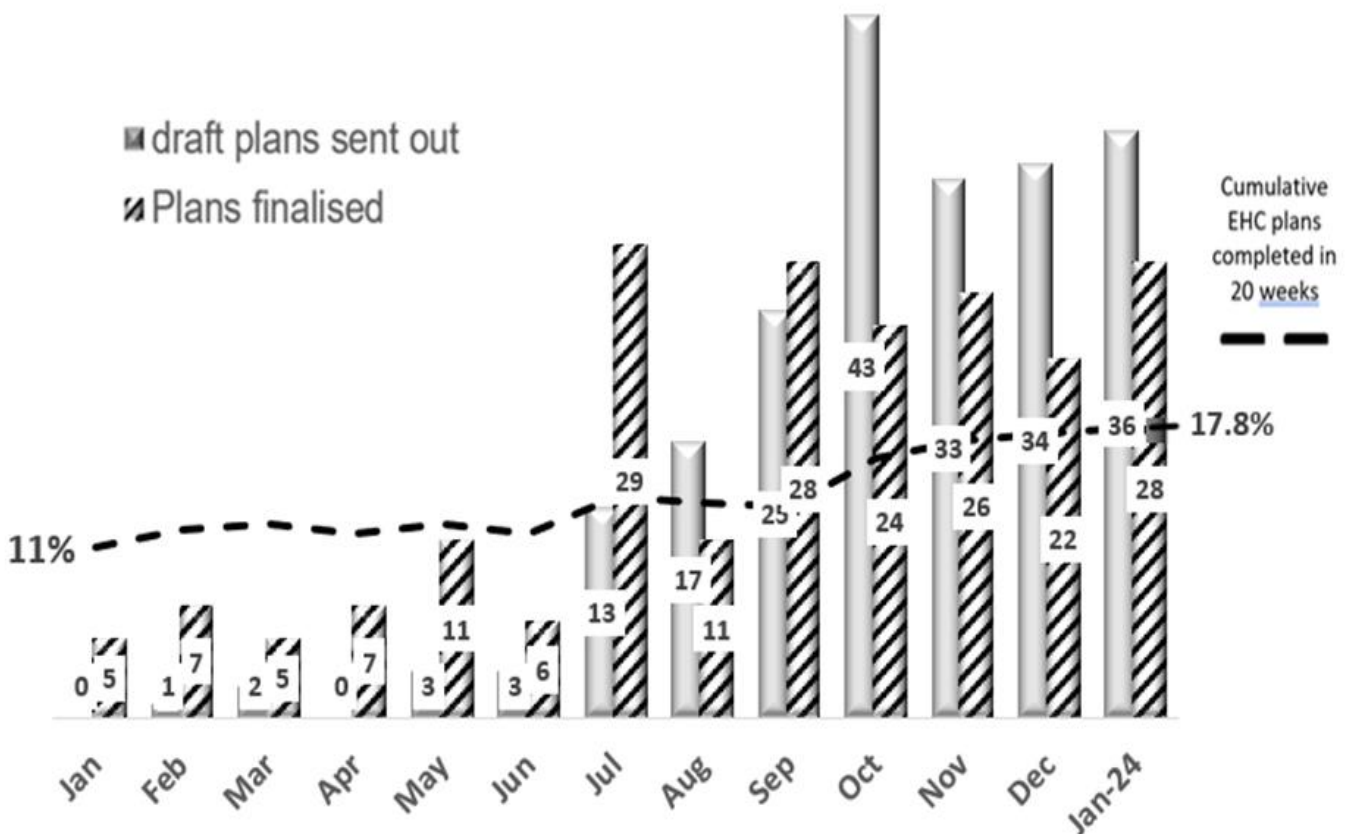
**Next Steps**

- Review of the impact of the new dysphasia service and any amendments made to the service.
- A comprehensive training offer for all integrated therapies to schools is being addressed through the integrated therapies project and will form part of the new commissioned service.
- The key focus for the next steps is to address the two outstanding actions.
  - ✓ Continuing improvement EHC plan compliance
  - ✓ Improving waiting times

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**Appendix 1 – Latest Performance Data**

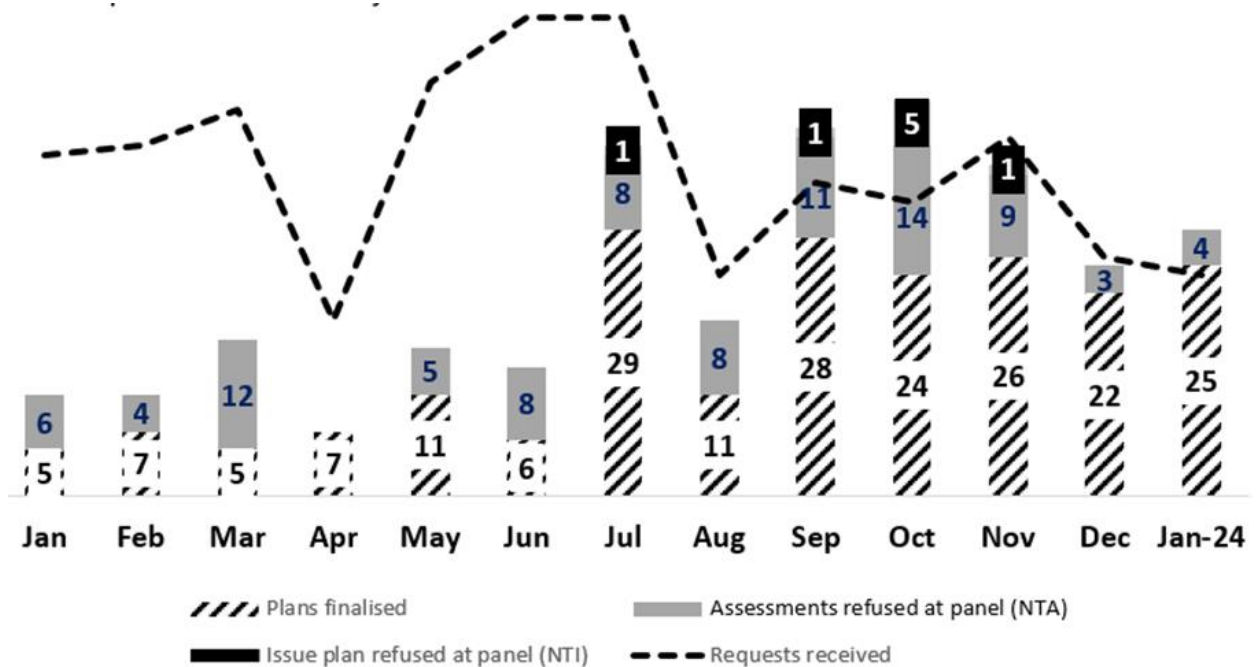
The graph below shows that the SEND 0-25 Statutory Team have maintained a higher level of EHC plans sent out each month as drafts or as final plans since July 2023. The dotted line shows the cumulative percentage of EHC plans that have been completed within the twenty week statutory timescale. This has risen consistently throughout 2023 and ended the year at 17.6% compared to 11% in 2022. As a comparison, between January and June 2023 only 37 EHCs were completed within the 20 statutory timescale compared to those completed between September 2023 and January 2024. When this increased to 123. This is despite clearing backlog cases that were already well over the timescales have been cleared. However, the cumulative year on year figure is still very low, despite the performance in the latter months, and on a month by month basis since September 2023. There needs to be a greater focus on timeliness for new cases. We will be reporting on backlog cases separately in the future so that their impact does not mask the performance of the team for new cases.



The table below shows the number of cases resolved each month by finalising EHC plans, a refusal to assess or a decision not to issue a plan. The dotted line shows the level of new requests received each month so, since September 2023, better performance and decision making is beginning to reduce the backlog of cases. In removing backlog cases children and young people that have been waiting the longest

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have been given priority. However, at this rate it will take more than a year to completely clear the backlog so the Operational Lead is drafting a further recovery plan to speed up this process which will be shared with the SEND Partnership Board in February.



Quarter 3 data from CYPIT (Children and young Peoples Integrated Therapies) shows there has been a marked increase in assessment requests for Slough (with consistently high percentage of these Not Known to service –62%). However, the overall compliance rate has consistently improved and now stands at 81% compliance within 6 weeks as opposed to 61% in Q2. This has largely been due to an improvement in administration, communication with partners and countermeasures put in place to improve overall processes with the handling of EHCA requests.