

West Berkshire Council SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 Innovation in SEND



Children with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.



WestBerkshire
COUNCIL

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Foreword

It is our privilege to introduce West Berkshire's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and Inclusion Strategy. This document represents a commitment to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and equitable environment for all children and young people in our community. It is grounded in our belief that every child, regardless of their abilities or needs, deserves access to high-quality education and support affording them the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Over the past year, we have engaged in extensive consultations with families, educators, healthcare professionals, and community organisations. Their insights have been invaluable, and we are grateful for the time and passion they have invested in shaping this strategy. It is through these collaborative efforts that we can truly understand and address the diverse needs of our children.

The strategy outlines a clear vision: to create an inclusive landscape where barriers to success are removed, and all children feel valued and supported. It is not just about meeting statutory obligations; it is about embracing a culture of inclusion that permeates every aspect of our support and education system. This means ensuring that our schools are equipped with the resources, training, and support necessary to provide tailored educational experiences. It also means fostering a community where differences are celebrated, and every child's contribution is recognised.



Cllr. Heather Codling

Portfolio Holder – Children, Education and Young People's Services

Our approach is underpinned by a set of core principles: collaboration, early intervention, person-centred planning, supporting children close to where they live and maximising independence. By working together across all sectors, we can identify and respond to needs more effectively, ensuring that children receive the right support at the right time. Early intervention is crucial in preventing difficulties from escalating and helping children achieve better long-term outcomes.

This strategy builds on the priorities of West Berkshire in its Council Strategy 2023-27;

- Services we are proud of
- A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all
- Tackling climate and ecological emergency
- A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire
- Thriving communities with strong local voice.

We are confident that this strategy accompanied by its delivery plan will serve as a robust framework for enhancing the experiences of children with SEND. It is a living document, designed to evolve as we learn and grow together. We urge all stakeholders to engage with it actively and work in unison to bring our vision to life.

Thank you for your dedication to this vital work.



AnnMarie Dodds

*Executive Director
(People - Children's Services)*



What the Council and Local Area must do for children and young people with SEND

In West Berkshire, we believe that Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is everyone's business, which means that everyone has a key role to play to ensure that children and young people with SEND, and their families, receive the support they need. Our vision for what we would like SEND Services to look like in West Berkshire is:

Children with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.

The SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 outlines the priorities we will be working on over the next five years and has been written in response to the information gathered as part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme (a programme run by the Department for

Education (DfE) to support Local Authorities, and their partners, to improve the delivery of SEND Services for children and young people whilst working to ensure that funding remains available to deliver these services) and the SEND Review which took place in 2023 (where we completed a review of the provision in West Berkshire, met with parents/carers, schools nurseries and voluntary providers and completed a young person's survey

Why do we need a SEND & Inclusion Strategy?

The Children and Families Act (2014) applied major changes to the way in which Local Authorities and their partners (e.g. education, health and care) help and support children and young people with SEND and their families.

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act (2014) outlines the legal responsibilities of Local Authorities, Education, Health and Care providers in relation to the provision of care and support for children and young people with SEND and their families, it also details the formal processes which must be followed in providing this care and support.

Under the Equality Act (2010), education providers have a legal duty to ensure they do not discriminate against children and young people with SEND; ensuring that all pupils, including those with SEND, are involved in every aspect of school life and that adjustments should be made to the way settings teach pupils to allow for this.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) is legal guidance which organisations who work with children and young people with SEND and their families must follow. It outlines core principles and provides guidance on how to work within legal frameworks to best support children and young people with SEND.

Having a SEND & Inclusion Strategy is important because it:

- Allows us to clearly see the impact our work is having on children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Clearly shows what our co-produced priorities are which supports with decision making.
- Gives direction within the local area, ensuring stakeholders are working together within the legal frameworks to deliver the identified priorities.
- It provides a focus for leaders.
- It allows us to monitor our progress against what we said we would do.

Governance

West Berkshire's SEND & Inclusion Strategy will be delivered in partnership by the Council, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), health providers, schools and other voluntary and community services and will be implemented using the principles of co-production.

The Council has overall responsibility for the delivery of the strategy and progress will be monitored by the SEND Operational Partnership Board and SEND Strategic Improvement Board.

Each priority area will have a delivery group created where colleagues from education, health, care and other services will become members, agree projects and project leaders, agree timescales and success criteria so we know we have been successful.

The strategy is supported by a Delivery Plan which outlines in more detail, under each priority, the actions we will take, when we will take them and the improvements we expect to see as a result. This will be updated annually.

Key Facts



****52%**
rise in the total
number of EHCP's in
West Berkshire over
the last 5 years
from 1032 to 1566.

*****17.2%**
of children in West
Berkshire schools have
SEND.
compared to the
England average
of 17.3%



*****4.7%**
CYP in West
Berkshire have an
EHCP compared
to the England
average of 4.3%

***41%**
of open cases in
Children's Services
have **SEND** (age 0-18)

***13.3%** of children
in **Primary Schools** and
8.7% in **Secondary**
Schools have **English as an**
Additional Language (EAL)



**At SEN Support:	**At EHCP:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) most identified Primary Need.• Autism & SEMH next most identified Primary Need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50% have the Primary Need of Autism.• SEMH next most identified Primary Need.• Speech, Language & Communication Needs (SLCN) are increasing.



What you told us: What we have done & what needs to improve

Throughout its development, the SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 has been informed by feedback, from across the Local Area Partnership, gathered as part of the DBV programme and as part of the SEND Review which took place in 2023. Feedback was gathered in several ways including:

- Case Review Sessions.
- Listening Forums.
- Coffee Mornings.
- SEND Advice Sessions.
- SEND Youth Survey.

This coproduction with children & young people, families, and key partners, will remain a focus during the delivery of our SEND & Inclusion Strategy. Feedback highlighted that there are things we are doing well, and things we need to improve.

What we have done well:

- New educational settings have been built.
- Specialist teams have been created or expanded including; Early Development & Inclusion (EDIT) Team the Autism Team and the Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Team.
- A new model of therapeutic practice has been introduced.
- Clear standards of SEND provision in schools have been set.
- Neurodiversity Service created with peer support available whilst awaiting assessment.
- 'Through My Eyes' project has helped develop the skills of staff working with children and young people with SLCN.

What needs to improve:

- Early identification and support of SEND needs.
- Improved transition, including transition to adulthood.
- Additional local provision required to meet need; particularly for SEMH, Autism and acute anxiety.
- More consistent access to employment related activity.
- Additional short break and respite provision, including increasing access to extracurricular activities for those children and young people with EHCPs.
- Continued upskilling of the workforce to ensure confidence in identifying and working with children and young people with SEND needs.
- Increased family confidence in school's abilities to meet SEND needs including in mainstream provision and without the need for an EHCP.
- Ensuring support is available throughout West Berkshire, reducing family's needs to travel to access the support they need.

Schools are struggling to meet the emotional and mental health needs of their learners, while parents are struggling to access the right services at the right time –
Case Review completed as part of DBV programme.

SENCOs and Parents/Carers both said they didn't believe the schools had the right resources to meet SEN Learners' needs –
Listening Forums as part of DBV Programme.

The overwhelming sensory environment and inflexibility of school policies in mainstream secondary schools means many SEN learners are unable to access mainstream learning -
Case Review completed as part of DBV programme.

I think that the key area that would be useful in delivering improved SEND provision in mainstream schools would be additional funding so that sufficient staffing can be in place to meet children's needs. –
SENCo feedback as part of DBV programme.

Individual teaching staff and support staff are very receptive to my child's needs -and seek to be proactive but the need and demand is too great for them to be able to offer the level of support my child needs. –
Parent feedback as part of DBV programme.

SEMH take up so much classroom time. Those children who don't necessarily need EHCPs then end up becoming an EHCP child because they don't have support earlier on...Some children need ASD unit. These children could be supported in mainstream without EHCP if they have somewhere to go and calm down during the day. –
SENCo's describing the challenges and support provided for children and young people with increasingly complex SEMH and Autism needs as part of DBV programme.

My teachers know that I am different from a lot of the other children and are trying to help me learn how to play and communicate better with the other children –
Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)

A quiet space helps me to learn and to focus like the HRB [Hearing Resource Base]. I enjoy Sensory Circuits because it helps me warm up for the day ahead of me –
Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)

Everything is good at the moment. More career advice in the next few years would be good as well as a variety of work experience. –
Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)

Having some clubs or places i can go to meet people and friends like me -
Young adult feedback as part of SEND Review (2023)



Our Approach and Priorities.

The Purpose of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy is to ensure:

Children and young people with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.

Our Approach:

Co-production with children, young people & families

Early Help & Prevention

Maximising independence for children and young people with SEND

Person-centred & trauma informed approaches

A joined-up approach to meeting children and young people's needs

Supporting families as close as possible to where they live

Our Priorities & Goals:

The priorities & goals of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy

<p>Priority 1: Early Years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the take-up of the Early Years entitlement, particularly for our most vulnerable families. • Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this. • Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5. • 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
<p>Priority 2: Early Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early. • Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support. • Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early. • Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity.
<p>Priority 3: Inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the capability of our local schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. • Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND. • Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education. • Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings. • Support our local schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision.
<p>Priority 4: Developing local specialist provision & support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally. • Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision. • Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision. • Develop bespoke packages of support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons. • Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short break offer to better meet the needs of children & young people with SEND and their families locally

<p>Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of our pupils for some, or all, of their education. • Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need. • Further develop short- and medium-term Alternative Provision to enable students to re-engage with education and return to mainstream schools. • Develop short- and medium-term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting.
<p>Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation to adulthood for young people with SEND and their families. • Increase opportunities for young people with SEND to secure employment, including the development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships. • Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning. • Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community. • Ensure pathways from children's to adults' health services work smoothly and are clearly understood.

Enabling the delivery of our priorities

- To develop a digital strategy which enables us to collect, use & share data more effectively; and to develop a digital dashboard to enable leaders' effective oversight.
- 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.
- To explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Development of a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND.
- To work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.
- Supporting the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders are able to respond to the views of children & young people and their families.
- Enhancing the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders are able to respond to the views of children and young people.
- To ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding.

Delivery Plan

There is a detailed delivery plan covering the period April 2024 – March 25 supporting this strategy. It will be reviewed and updated annually. A summary of the plan for 24/25 is provided below.

Summary - ONE Plan: DBV Programme & SEND and Inclusion Strategy

INNOVATION IN SEND ONE PLAN : DBV Programme & SEND and Inclusion Strategy

	Priority 1: Early Years	Priority 2: Early Intervention	Priority 3: Inclusion	Priority 4: Developing local specialist provision & support	Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood	YEAR
<p>DBV Workstream 1 - Clear communications with families and wider local area partners to support access to services and the SEND system when they need it.</p> <p>Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of the communications strategy and parent champion programme to improve engagement, especially of our most vulnerable families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping of exiting services to ensure clear pathways for referral and this will be communicated on an updated co-produced Local Offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing decision making processes to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Decision making processes to be updated, where necessary, on the Local Offer 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation to adulthood for young people with SEND and their families. Increase opportunities for young people with SEND to secure employment, including the development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships. 	2024-5
<p>DBV Workstream 2 - Enabling settings, schools and colleges to meet the diverse needs of their communities locally including complex emotional and mental health needs of CYP.</p> <p>Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the Early Development and Inclusion Team (EDIT) to enable the team to take direct referrals from early years settings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of schools' additional SEND training needs and create a plan to meet identified gaps. Ensure existing SEN support teams work in a coordinated way and provide a single point of referral/ access. Explore opportunities to provide outreach support to mainstream schools from our special schools and the Specialist Inclusion Support Service (ISS) Whole School Mental Health Project to be expanded and offered to all mainstream schools in West Berkshire, to be evaluated after one year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From our gap analysis identify any gaps which are barriers to inclusive practice in our mainstream schools, identify mechanisms by which these gaps can be addressed (through commissioning or co-commissioning) to further support our schools and settings. Developing and sharing a best practice guide to support schools and settings on the most effective use of funding Element 2 Review to the use of element 2 to promote targeted intervention at SEN support through early identification of need and timely access to appropriate resources. Develop a Transitions Support Programme, to be led by schools and co-produced in clusters, to ensure that children and young people are appropriately supported to successfully transfer into their next mainstream provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand better the needs of the current and future cohorts of children with SEND in order to ensure the availability of the type of education provisions required to meet need, the development of a SEND Sufficiency Strategy. 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. Reviewing and updating of Strategic and Operational commissioning and procurement practices, in relation to placements and Alternative Provision - including brokerage and contract management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go out to the market to develop a range of alternative provision available in West Berkshire to meet individualised needs of our children and young people. Establish commissioning and quality assurance processes in relation to alternative provision 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning. Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community. Ensure pathways from children's to adults' health services work smoothly, and are clearly understood. 	2024-5
<p>SEND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2024-2029</p> <p>Priorities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the take-up of the Early Years entitlement, particularly for our most vulnerable families. Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this. Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5. 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. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early. Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support. Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early. Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the capability of our local schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND. Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education. Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings. Support our local schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally. Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision. Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision. Develop bespoke packages of support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons. Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short breaks offer to better meet the needs of children & young people with SEND and their families locally. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of our pupils for some or all of their education. Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need. Further develop short- and medium-term Alternative Provision to enable students to re-engage with education and return to mainstream schools. Develop short and medium term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting. 	2024-9	

Enabling the delivery of our priorities.

- To develop a digital strategy which enables us to collect, use & share data more effectively; and to develop a digital dashboard enabling leaders' effective oversight.
- 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.
- 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.

Glossary

Abbreviation	Word(s)	Meaning
AP	Alternative Provision	Settings which provide an education to children and young people who are unable to attend a mainstream school.
CYP	Children and young people	The children and young people being thought about.
DBV	Delivering Better Value	A programme run by the Department for Education (DfE) to support Local Authorities, and their partners, to improve the delivery of SEND Services for children and young people whilst working to ensure that funding remains available to deliver these services.
DfE	Department for Education	The DfE have responsibility for children's services and education (including Early Years, Schools, Further and Higher Education Policy, Apprenticeships and wider skills) in England.
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant	A ring-fenced amount of money from the Government which pays for individual budgets in maintained schools, academies and free schools.
EBSA	Emotional Based School Avoidance	This is when children and young people, who want to attend school, have a reduced, or non-attendance at school due to emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues.
EHCNA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	A joined-up assessment of a child or young person's Education, Health and Social Care needs completed by the Local Authority.
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan	A plan which details the Education, Health and Social Care support provided to a child or young person with SEND.
HNB	High Needs Block	The budget within the Dedicated Schools Grant that is used to pay for support for children and young people with SEND.
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) looks at the current and future health and care needs of the local area which then informs the planning and buying of health, well-being and social care services within that local area.
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty	This is when children and young people find it much harder than their peers to develop the skills to understand concepts.
PCF	Parent/Carer Forum	A group of parents or carers of children and young people with SEND who work with the Local Authority and other providers to make sure that the services they provide meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families.

PfA	Preparing for Adulthood	The support provided to children and young people with SEND which helps them to improve the independence and life skills they will need as an adult.
Census	School Census	An electronic collection of pupil data from Primary, Secondary, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units.
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs	A type of special educational need in which children and young people can find it hard to manage their emotions and how they behave.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities	A learning difficulty or disability which requires special educational provision to be made for a child or young person.
SEN Support	SEN Support	This is what schools and similar settings use to find, and meet the needs of, children and young people with SEND.
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs	This is when someone finds it hard to communicate, both communicating with others, but also understanding what others are communicating to them.
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty	This is when someone finds it hard with certain parts of learning for example; they may have Dyslexia or Dyscalculia.



We are committed to being accessible to everyone. If you require this document in an alternative format or translation, please call the SEN and Disabled Children's Team on Telephone 01635 551111.

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