To: Councillor Asare (Chair)
   Councillors McEwan, Ballsdon,
   Cresswell, Eden, Gittings, Griffith,
   Keane, Lanzoni, Magon, Naz, Mpofu-
   Coles, O'Connell, DP Singh and
   Woodward

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

Direct: ☎ 0118 937 2332
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24 June 2025

Your contact is: Jemma Durkan - Committee Services

NOTICE OF MEETING - ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE 2 JULY 2025

A meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee will be held on **Wednesday, 2 July 2025 at 6.30 pm** in the **Council Chambers, Civic Offices, Reading**. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA   Page No

1.   **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

     Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.

2.   **DELEGATED DECISIONS**   5 - 6

3.   **MINUTES**   7 - 10

4.   **PETITIONS**

     Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

5.   **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS**

CIVIC OFFICES EMERGENCY EVACUATION: If an alarm sounds, leave by the nearest fire exit quickly and calmly and assemble on the corner of Bridge Street and Fobney Street. You will be advised when it is safe to re-enter the building.

Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

6. INTRODUCTION TO GREENSHAW LEARNING TRUST

A report to consider School Standards and Attainment, and priorities and planned activity to improve attainment.

A report to consider the progress on delivering the SEND Strategy for Reading 2022-2027.

A report providing the Committee of the progress of delivery against the Year 3 (2024/25) All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan across Reading.

A report requesting the Committee to consider granting delegated authority for the procurement and entering into a contract for support/care services.

A report requesting the Committee to consider granting delegated authority for the procurement and entering into a contract for support/care services.

A report proving an update on the progress of the 2025/26 Youth Justice Service annual plan and progress of the Improvement Plan.

The Committee will receive a report providing the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection and plans to address the findings of the Inspection.

WEBCASTING NOTICE

Please note that this meeting may be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast via the Council's website. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during a webcast will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy.

Members of the public seated in the public gallery will not ordinarily be filmed by the automated camera system. However, please be aware that by moving forward of the pillar, or in the unlikely event of a technical malfunction or other unforeseen circumstances, your image may be captured. **Therefore, by entering the meeting room, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes**.

Members of the public who participate in the meeting will be able to speak at an on-camera or off-camera microphone, according to their preference.

Please speak to a member of staff if you have any queries or concerns.

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ACE	Min No.	Title	Delegated Decision	Progress
15.01.25	Item 35	Nursing Dementia Block Contract	That the ==Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care== be given delegated authority, in consultation with the ==Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care==, to: • Award the contracts to the successful provider(s) of four block bed contracts of five beds to run for five years with an option to extend for a further five years. The lifetime of the contract budget had been agreed at a maximum price of £10,061,613; • Negotiate, vary, extend and manage the contract(s) at the appropriate times throughout the lifecycle within the lifetime financial envelope stated and in accordance with the relevant Procurement Regulations and the contracts.	Partly Completed - 1 of the 4 available blocks has been secured and DCASC will be going to tender for the remaining blocks.

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**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 19 MARCH 2025**

Present: Councillor Mpofu-Coles (Chair);

Councillors Lanzoni (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Cresswell, Davies, Gittings, Griffith, Keane, McEwan, McGoldrick and Nikulina

Apologies: Councillors O'Connell and DP Singh

Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted and celebrated that it had been World Social Work Day on 18 March 2025 and Women's History Month was also taking place in March 2025 with International Women's Day on 8 March 2025.

37.   DELEGATED DECISIONS

The delegated decisions agreed at the ACE Committee meeting on 15 January 2025 were noted.

38.   MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

39.   MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The minutes of the following meeting were received:

Health and Wellbeing Board – 11 October 2024

40.   SUSPENSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the Task and Finish Group that was established to support work being undertaken to improve schools suspensions and exclusions. The Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference were attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

At its meeting on 15 January 2025 the Committee received an update on the rates of suspensions and exclusions in Reading schools. The update confirmed the next steps being taken to support efforts to reduce the improved position regarding school exclusions, the position regarding suspensions and the actions being taken to reduce school suspension rates in Reading, in particular:

- An invitation to the Chief Executives of priority Trusts to attend ACE Committee to share their plans to promote school inclusion and to reduce suspensions from schools.

- The establishment of an ACE Task and Finish group to consider what other actions could be taken to reduce suspensions from schools

The Committee were informed that the Task and Finish Group had met on two occasions to scope and plan the focus of the Group. It was noted that the Group would like to investigate best practice, where practice was working well, learning from others and learning from the school community. The Group would be visiting schools and would aim to engage other partners such as Thames Valley Police. It was noted that the Group had already been on two site visits to John Madejski Academy and were due to visit The Wren.

Simon Uttley, Headteacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School, and Co-Chair of the Reading Education Partnership Board; and David Littlemore, Headteacher of Kings Academy Prospect, and Chair of the Reading Schools and Colleges Leaders Forum, were present at the meeting for the item and addressed the Committee and answered questions on their experience of suspensions, exclusions and best practice. The main points noted were:

- Reading Borough Council was a collaborative authority and school leaders worked together.
- Work was being undertaken to seek better solutions and opportunities so that no child was left behind.
- Headteachers worked in partnership in the interests of children and young people.
- Persistent behaviour and physical behaviour affected young people in different ways.
- Working with families, keeping a social contact and having positive relationships with families were important.
- There was a need for additional high quality learning provision for young people that headteachers wanted to be involved in.
- Key drivers were in place to tackle the number of suspensions and these had been reduced.
- Persistent disruptive behaviours were seen every day in schools and support was needed for schools.
- There was a lack of alternative provision and it was suggested that an independent alternative provision would help bring down suspension figures.
- Main stream education was not always the right path for some students which culminated in suspensions.
- Consideration could be given to good practice in other local authorities.
- The alternative education provision should be run by professionals to support students and to help work on behaviours and provide support for special educational needs.

Brian Grady, Director of Education, Brighter Futures for Children, explained that a key priority in the SEND Strategy was around commissioning regarding a local alternative education provision in the Borough.

It was noted that the Chief Executive of the Greenshaw Learning Trust, who were the new trust host for John Madejski Academy would be attending the next meeting.

The Committee asked a number of questions and the following points were noted:

- Headteachers would want to help co-create the alternative provision to provide quality of education over quantity and local accountability.
- There was a balance of supporting children and parents, and providing a duty of care for children that found themselves in trouble.
- Schools provided alternative educational provisions and pathways to avoid suspensions within school.
- A specialist provision would be to provide full time education with core subjects and more vocational subjects.
- The school standards report, that would be considered at the next ACE Committee, would identify work being undertaken to consider disproportionality and trying to reduce inequality in the education system.

The members of the Task and Finish Group provided updates and comments on their visits to JMA, the positive experiences at the visits and the changes that were being made to improve education and standards at the school.

The Chair thanked Simon Uttley and David Littlemore for attending the meeting and welcomed them to attend a future meeting to provide future updates.

Resolved –

(1) That the establishment of a Task and Finish Group regarding suspensions from schools be noted.

(2) That the updates from the Task and Finish Group and local school Multi Academy Trusts on their plans to promote school inclusion and to reduce suspensions be noted.

41. SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation from Rachael Smart, Clinical Lead Nurse, Florey Clinic, Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust on the integrated sexual health service in Reading.

The presentation outlined the scope of services provided by the Florey Clinic, a Level 3 Sexual Health Service based at 21a Craven Road, Reading, with satellite services across the community. The clinic offered Genitourinary Medicine (GUM), contraception, HIV care, and psychosexual counselling.

The presentation included the following points:

- Trends in STI Diagnoses (2019–2023): Data from national and local sources showed varying rates of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis across the South East, with a focus on young people aged 15-24.

- Youth Engagement: The clinic had seen a consistent increase in STI testing among under-25s, with internal data showing high testing rates and volumes, particularly among Reading residents.

- Outreach and Innovation: The "Let's Get to Zero" Bus Project was launched to support the national goal of ending HIV transmission by 2030. The project delivered 24 outreach events, testing 175 individuals—77% of whom were new to the clinic. The campaign was supported by social media and received regional media coverage.

- Future Plans: The clinic aimed to improve public health outcomes by increasing testing uptake, raising awareness of HIV prevention goals, and expanding outreach and digital engagement.

The Committee thanked Rachael for the information and requested that a future update report be provided in a years time.

Resolved – That a future report/presentation be provided to the Committee in 12 months.

Final Comment

Members of the Committee thanked the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee for her contribution over the years.

(The meeting closed at 8.04 pm)

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee **02 July 2025**	Reading Borough Council Working better with you

Title	**Annual School Standards and Achievement Report 2023/2024**
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Lara Patel, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report author	Brian Grady, Director of Education
Lead councillor	Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health
Corporate priority	Inclusive Economy
Recommendations	The Committee is asked to: 1. Note the position regarding school standards and attainment as set out in the attached report. 2. Endorse the priorities and current and planned activity to further improve attainment, with a focus on reducing inequalities, set out in Section 16 of the attached report.

1. Executive summary

1.1. Education is a strategic priority for Reading Borough Council. The Annual School Standards report sets out how Brighter Futures for Children, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, supports statutory duties regarding education and school standards in support of Reading Borough Council strategic priorities and policies. It uses verified examination data and so relates to the previous (2023/24) academic year, not the current academic year.

1.2. This report builds on the School Standards report presented to the July 2024 ACE Committee report and the identified strategic priorities set out in that report. The report includes expanded data on school attendance and is accompanied by a more detailed report on Children Missing Education.

1.3. The Annual School Standards report 2023/2024 report confirms that schools are implementing research informed approaches to improve standards, with most schools being judged positively by Ofsted and in findings from school effectiveness assurance activities. Actions taken since the last report to ACE Committee are set out in this report and form the basis of the current Education Partnership Board strategic priorities for action, which are being driven by the Education Partnership Board.

2. Policy context

2.1. The Council Plan 2025-28 has established five priorities. These are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading

- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

2.2.   The Council plan has an objective to promote best practice across Reading's schools, helping to improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for disadvantaged and vulnerable children. We aim to do this by delivering the Education Strategy to reduce education inequality and increase school attendance and attainment for those groups who experience the most disadvantage.

2.3.   Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website. These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective, and economical.

3.   Overview of school standards and attainment

3.1.   The enclosed school standards report sets out a detailed overview of standards and attainment. Key highlights are summarised below

3.2.   There has been a positive impact of work undertaken with schools and settings through the early years and primary phase on attainment and narrowing of gaps. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), there are positive trends, with an improvement in children achieving the Good Level of Development (GLD). In the early years, we are now seeing disadvantaged Children without SEND Achieve in line with their peers.

3.3.   At Stage 1 (KS1), Phonics Screening Check Year 1 pass rates have improved significantly, and Multiplication Check **y**ear 4 performance is strong compared to national benchmarks.

3.4.   At Key Stage 2 (KS2), we have seen **i**mprovement in reading outcomes and national rankings. It is particularly pleasing to see Disadvantaged Children outcomes improving beyond the national rate. Writing Outcomes **r**emain the weakest area, impacting overall combined outcomes, and continues to be an area of focus.

3.5.   More Reading children with SEND achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (RWM) compared to national. Outcomes for Reading children with an EHCP however are below national averages.

3.6.   Whilst secondary phase results overall continue to be strong, the attainment data emphasise a need to enhance the partnership response at secondary phase to narrow gaps. At Key Stage 4 (KS4) Reading ranks 13th in Attainment 8 and 5th in Progress 8 among 152 local authorities. However there continues to be significant variability in Progress 8 and Attainment 8 across schools and weaker outcomes for children with SEND.

3.7.   Across our system, weaker outcomes for children of Black Caribbean Heritage remain a concern and partnership action to work more closely with the community to identify solutions is planned in the next two academic terms.

3.8.   In Post-16 Education at Key Stage 5 (KS5), Reading remains in the top quintile against national benchmarks. There are large variations between schools however and a decline in strong A Level performance over the last three years.

3.9.   The report this year for the first time provides an analysis of attendance and the impact of attendance on outcomes for children. Persistent absenteeism impacts outcomes in all phases and has a disproportionate impact on children with other vulnerabilities. Committee have sponsored a Task and Finish group considering root causes of poor

attendance and suspensions and partnership actions we might take. This Task and Finish group will report on progress at a future committee meeting.

3.10. Cohort complexity in terms of EAL, SEND and in year mobility, continues to impact outcomes in all phases across Reading. In some schools, the proportions of children with vulnerabilities are well above national averages. There is a strong correlation between cohort complexity and underperformance. Cohort complexity impacts the workload and school improvement focus of senior leaders and can lengthen the improvement trajectory in these schools can take time. Partnership action to support schools meet the complexity of children's needs will remain a high priority of the Education Partnership Board, as set out in Section 16 and 17 of the report.

3.11. There has been a national increase in the rates of young people Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET), and this has been echoed with an increase in rates in Reading, particularly for vulnerable children. Proactive work is ensuring that every young person at risk of being NEET is known and this proactive approach is helping a high proportion of young people to be supported to access opportunities. Reading remains one of the best performing Local Authority areas in the country with amongst the lowest numbers of young people NEET.

3.12. Skills based courses are significantly oversubscribed and examination retake requirements provide a barrier for some learners. Disparity in KS4 and KS5 outcomes, national pressures on increasing numbers of young people becoming NEET and the need for a wider range of courses for children post 16 highlight the need for an enhanced partnership focus 14-19 outcomes. This enhanced focus will inform partnership priorities over the coming academic year.

3.13. School governing boards and their executive leaders are ultimately accountable for the standards and achievement in their schools. The roles and responsibilities of BFfC on behalf of Reading Borough Council are:

a) To act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who are: Looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences institutional and societal discrimination, have a social worker, are a survivor of trauma and or have physical or mental health needs

b) Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress

c) To be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.

d) To identify schools causing concern and to rapidly intervene where a school is at risk of decline or failing standards, working closely with the DfE Regional Director, diocese, and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve.

e) Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools; enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.

f) Exercise relevant powers to intervene in locally maintained schools causing concern and to work with the Department for Education Regional Director where there are concerns about school effectiveness in academy schools and settings

3.14. The Annual School Standards report confirms the priorities to improve school standards and attainment which are reflected within the Brighter Futures for Children Business Plan Priority 4: *influencing and supporting education settings to offer high quality inclusive teaching and learning to support achievement for all.*

3.15. The School Effectiveness team leads on the work with schools to deliver improved outcomes and standards and the work of the team is summarised in the report.

3.16. Reading Borough Council has high ambition to provide opportunity for all of our children and young people to thrive in education and succeed. The strategic approach to supporting improved educational outcomes and school effectiveness has been strengthened through the Education Partnership Board strategic priorities. Progress against these priorities is set out in Section 16 of the report.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

4.1. The Council Corporate Plan sets out our strategic aim to promote best practice across Reading's schools, helping to improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

4.2. The work undertaken on behalf of Reading Borough Council with Reading schools helps secure access to consistently high-quality education for all Reading children, to safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's children, to promote more equal communities in Reading and secure Reading's economic and cultural success.

5. Environmental and climate implications

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2. Ensuring high quality education available to all residents may reduce carbon emissions from unnecessary travel. There are no direct environmental and climate implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

6. Community engagement

6.1. As set out in the report, engagement with schools is critical to deliver improved outcomes for Reading children through a self-improving school to school support system. School leaders will be attending alongside BFfC officers to present this report and to engage further with committee on relevant aspects of the report, including the context of current standards and attainment, and priority improvement actions.

6.2. To ensure we develop solutions with the community to the challenges of raising attainment for disadvantaged groups, including children of Black Caribbean Heritage, a programme of community conversations will be held over the next academic year, to engage children and families directly in actions to improve attendance and attainment.

7. Equality impact assessment

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. The actions set out in this report are intended to have a differential positive impact on people with protected characteristics, who experience a risk of disproportionately poor

educational outcomes as identified in the Key Stage outcomes data in Sections 4-10 of this report: namely disability, race and sex (gender).

8. Other relevant considerations

8.1. No other relevant considerations have been identified related to this report.

9. Legal implications

9.1. The Education Act 1996 establishes the fundamental legal framework for local authority education duties. Section 13 places a general duty on local authorities to "contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary education, and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area". In this way, it is assumed that any child learning within the borough is a Reading pupil regardless of the form of governance of the school. Reading Borough Council (RBC) is therefore responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools and local education provisions.

9.2. Statutory duties and power are delegated by RBC to BFfC (Children and Young Persons Act 2008), who undertake the local authority statutory duties (Children Act 2004, Childcare Act 2006) to:

a) to promote cooperation between itself and other relevant organisations in order to improve the well-being of children in its area". This includes both "protection from harm and neglect as well as positive duties such as promoting physical and mental health". In this was the Council can act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who are: Looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences discrimination, or have a social worker.

b) be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.

c) exercise its education functions to promote high standards

d) exercise its powers to intervene in schools causing concern (in line with the DfE Schools Causing Concern 2022 statutory guidance).

10. Financial implications

10.1. With the removal from Local Authorities by HM Government of the School Improvement and Monitoring Brokerage Grant, the work of Brighter Futures for Children with Reading schools to support and challenge improved standards and attainment is funded solely through community and maintained school funding of the Dedicated Schools Grant. There are no direct financial implications regarding this report, which reports on the current funded activity.

11. Timetable for implementation

11.1. The Education Strategy being implemented by the Education Partnership Board and summarised in Sections 16 and 17 of the report sets out actions being taken between 2024 and 2027. This report will update on progress of agreed actions and impact of these actions on standards and attainment annually.

12. Background papers

12.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. Annual School Standards Report 2023/2024

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School Standards and Achievement Annual Report

2023-2024

☐ **For decision**   ☒ **For discussion**   ☒ **For information**

SUMMARY

This is the annual report on school standards and achievement for the academic year 2023-2024. The purpose of this report is to set out the current standards and outcomes for Reading schools and how BFfC, on behalf of RBC, meets Reading Borough Council's duties regarding education and school standards and supports RBC's strategic priorities and policies. It uses verified examination data and so relates to the previous academic year.

OWNER
Brian Grady, Director of Education
Alice Boon, Strategic Lead School Effectiveness

VERSION
Final

DATE
01-06-2025

Contents

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1. Introduction

- This report provides a comprehensive overview of the educational performance and standards achieved in Reading schools during the academic year 2023-2024. The report outlines the trends observed, and the impact of school leaders on raising standards. The report highlights key trends, achievements, and areas for improvement across all educational stages, from early years to post-16.

- The report supports leaders across the system to evaluate and revise Reading's Education strategic priorities, so that consistent evidence-based improvement approaches can be agreed, commissioned and implemented.

- Data for pupil groups provided in this report, does not show where individuals are represented in more than one pupil group and some data reflects cohort sizes that are not statistically significant.

- Attendance and suspension/ exclusion data for groups, is unvalidated and may show minimal variation with statistically adjusted published results issued by the DfE.

- Shading in tables is used to highlight variance between schools for the reader and not to offer judgement or a RAG graded view of schools' performance

2. Executive Summary

Table 1: Education Data Performance trends for the last three years in Reading against national benchmarks. Data Source: Reading Data Matrix January 2025

Attainment in Reading Schools		Updated	Year	Reading	(basis)	On Target	National	Stat Neigh	South East	Children with an EHCP		Children with SEN Support		Disadvantaged Children		Black and/or Black Mixed Heritage		EAL	
										Reading	National	Reading	National	Reading	National	Reading	National	Reading	National
Good level Development	EYFSP	Nov-24	2024	66.9%	final N24	A	67.7%	68.0%	69.8%	4.3%	3.8%	26.6%	24.9%	55.9%	52.0%	57.9%	64.1%	67.2%	63.5%
			2023	63.8%	final N23	A	67.2%	67.7%	69.6%	6.9%	3.8%	26.1%	24.3%	52.3%	52.0%	63.9%	64.2%	65.9%	62.4%
			2022	64.0%	final N22	A	65.2%	64.9%	67.5%	0.0%	3.7%	28.8%	23.0%	54.3%	49.4%	62.9%	62.1%	64.5%	60.2%
Phonics (WA)	Year 1	Jul-24	2024	80.7%	final N24	G	80.2%	80.5%	80.3%	22.8%	20.3%	55.0%	51.6%	74.6%	68.4%	81.5%	77.4%	83.9%	79.8%
			2023	76.3%	final N23	A	78.9%	79.0%	78.6%	13.0%	19.8%	50.0%	48.5%	63.7%	66.8%	79.2%	46.7%	81.0%	78.4%
			2022	75.2%	final N22	A	75.5%	76.1%	74.9%	16.9%	18.8%	46.5%	43.5%	60.3%	62.5%	74.6%	74.5%	77.4%	75.2%
MTC	Year 4	Nov-24	2024	20.9	final N24	G	20.6	21.5	20.3	17.2	15.2	16.8	16.8	18.5	18.9	20.4	21.2	22.0	21.9
			2023	20.2	final N23	G	20.2	21.0	20.0	14.6	14.7	16.4	16.0	17.7	18.3				
			2022	20.1	final N22	G	19.8	19.9	19.5	11.1	14.5	15.7	15.5	17.3	17.2				
Expected level (RWM)	KS2	Jul-24	2024	58.2%	prov N24	A	60.6%	60.1%	60.1%	7.4%	8.8%	30.3%	25.6%	40.1%	45.6%	51.0%	60.1%	62.2%	62.5%
			2023	55.5%	final N23	R	59.5%	58.8%	58.9%	6.3%	8.4%	23.9%	23.6%	35.9%	44.1%	46.6%	58.1%	58.8%	60.6%
			2022	54.0%	final N22	R	58.7%	57.4%	57.8%	6.1%	7.1%	20.1%	21.1%	33.4%	42.9%	42.6%	57.7%	60.7%	60.7%
Attainment 8 Score	KS4	Dec-24	2024	48.8	prov N24	G	46.1	47.5	47.2	11.5	14.2	34.6	33.1	31.1	34.7			52.7	49.7
			2023	50.1	final N23	G	46.4	47.6	47.4	10.0	14.0	35.5	33.3	31.1	35.2	42.6	46.6	50.3	48.6
			2022	52.0	final N22	G	48.9	50.2	50.1	11.7	14.3	34.8	34.9	35.0	37.6	45.4	49.0	56.0	50.7
Progress 8 Score	KS4	Dec-24	2024	-0.02	prov N24	G	-0.03	0.07	-0.02	-1.64	-1.13	-0.48	-0.45	-0.83	-0.57			0.60	0.51
			2023	0.03	final N23	G	-0.03	0.08	-0.02	-1.22	-1.12	-0.56	-0.45	-0.73	-0.56	-0.17	0.08	0.42	0.51
			2022	-0.09	final N22	R	-0.03	0.06	-0.03	-1.71	-1.33	-0.86	-0.47	-0.76	-0.55	-0.32	0.07	0.44	0.55
APS per entry	KS5	Nov-24	2024	36.84	prov N24	G	35.49		35.02	19.4	32.0	33.7	32.8	27.5	30.2			35.5	33.1
			2023	38.31	prov N23	G	34.16	33.68	35.08	40.0	32.3	26.7	32.1	29.8	29.9			39.9	33.0
			2022	41.92	final N22	G	37.86	37.42	38.63	21.7	35.7	38.9	35.8	31.4	33.5			41.8	36.6
Level 2 Attainment	Age 19	Apr-24	2023	82.1%	final N23	A	85.8%		85%	34.6%	30.0%	63.7%	66.0%	62.3%	69.8%				
			2022	76.1%	final N22	R	81.7%		83%	25.0%	28.9%	56.1%	63.2%	49.6%	66.7%				
			2021	74.8%	final N21	R	81.7%	81%	82%	23.8%	29.0%	47.6%	62.3%	51.2%	66.6%				

Table 6 Attainment Levels   Source: DfE Statistics as per dates on each line

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Headline analysis:

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):

- Improvement in children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD).

- Disadvantaged Children without Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) achieve in line with their peers.

Stage 1 (KS1):

- Phonics Screening Check Year 1 pass rates improved significantly.

- Multiplication Check Year 4 performance strong compared to national benchmarks.

Key Stage 2 (KS2):

- Improvement in reading outcomes and national rankings.

- Disadvantaged Children outcomes improving beyond the national rate.

- Writing outcomes remain the weakest area, impacting overall combined outcomes.

- More Reading children with SEND achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) compared to national. Outcomes for Reading children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) however are below national averages.

Key Stage 4 (KS4):

- Reading ranks 13th in Attainment 8 and 5th in Progress 8 among 152 local authorities.

- Significant variability in Progress 8 and Attainment 8 across schools remains.

- Weaker outcomes for Special Education Needs (SEN) support, EHCP and disadvantaged pupils.

- Weaker outcomes for children of Black Caribbean Heritage.

Post-16 Education Key Stage 5 (KS5):

- Reading remains in the top quintile against national benchmarks, but a decline in this strong A Level performance over the last three years and a wide variation between schools.

- Continued strong overall performance of children in Employment, Education or Training, but an increasing number of children Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), particularly vulnerable children.

- Skills based courses are significantly oversubscribed and Level 2 retake requirements provide a barrier for some learners.

Other issues highlighted in data:

- Persistent absenteeism impacts outcomes in all phases and has a disproportionate impact on children with other vulnerabilities.

- Cohort complexity in terms of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL), SEND and in year mobility, continues to impact outcomes in all phases across Reading. In some

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schools, the proportions of children with vulnerabilities are well above national averages. There is a strong correlation between cohort complexity and school outcomes. Cohort complexity impacts the workload in schools and school improvement focus of senior leaders. This means the improvement trajectory in these schools can take time. Extra capacity in terms of school improvement is often needed, but difficult to finance and source. Falling rolls continue to put pressure on school budgets and in some cohorts can impact outcomes.

Strategic Framework:

- The Education Partnership Board (EPB) was established to identify and address local performance issues and develop school-to-school support. The impact and influence of the board is growing within the resources available.

- More school-to-school support is needed to impact change and shift outcomes significantly, in the weakest performing schools. To date, focused cluster led school improvement support has been limited due to resourcing.

National Education Landscape:

- National changes to accountability, curriculum and statutory responsibilities will impact the system over the next 18 months.

- Current Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted Consultations have wide-reaching Implications for schools.

- Intervention in schools with complex needs may be more likely if planned changes to national accountability systems and Ofsted go ahead as planned. There are possible unintended consequences of these changes on inclusion and staff retention, recruitment and wellbeing.

3. The local system

Table 2: the numbers of schools by type in each education phase and sector in Reading 2023-2024

School Type	Nursery	Primary	Alternative Provision Academy	Secondary	Special	Total
Academy Converter		0		2	1	3
Multi-Academy Trust		13	1	8	2	24
Community School	5	22			1	28
Voluntary Aided School		5		1		6
Total	**5**	**40**	**1**	**11**	**4**	**61**

- Reading schools and settings include those that are Local Authority (LA) maintained, Converter Academies, Multi Academy Trust sponsored, selective grammar and independent schools. School Effectiveness activities are focused on locally maintained schools where BFfC on behalf of Reading Borough Council has statutory duties, powers, and direct influence.

- All schools and settings can purchase school improvement support through the School Effectiveness Service.

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- Intelligence about all schools is collected as part of LA duties under the School Effectiveness Framework. School visits, Data analysis and monthly multi-agency school effectiveness meetings identify risks to schools and pupils and identify mitigation and escalation actions. This has enabled officers to make well-evidenced enquiries and take timely action to support children, families, and schools.

- In 2024-25 all academy partners have been offered CEO meetings and Local Headteacher "Keeping in touch" meetings to identify local issues and barriers to improvement and identify opportunities for local school improvement partnerships.

- Annual quality assurance visits are in place for all 25 primary schools and 4 secondary schools with LA funded Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs).

- All locally maintained schools receive an annual safeguarding audit led by the School Effectiveness team.

- All schools are required to submit Safeguarding self-audits (Section 175 Safeguarding Audit) as part of Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership arrangements. Audits are analysed and reported through BFfC Governance and the BWSP Board.

- The school effectiveness team conducts KS2 writing moderation ad KS2 SATS monitoring visits as part of LA statutory duties.

4. School Standards 2023-24: Early Years Foundation Stage

The following sections set out school standards by phase of education, highlighting where gaps persist against national benchmarks. This first section considers the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Table 3: Early education placements and staffing between 2021 and 2024. Data source: Reading performance Matrix

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of 3 and 4 year olds benefitting from free early education in Reading	3690	3779	3693	775
% Children Benefitting from early education places in Reading	80	88	89	94
% Children Benefitting from early education places in England	90	92	94	95
% 3 & 4 olds in funded early education with Good/outstanding providers in Reading	89	93	96	95
% 3 & 4 olds in funded early education with Good/outstanding providers in England	93	93	94	95
Number of 2 year olds benefitting from funded early education in Reading	310	377	316	273
% children benefitting from early education places in Reading	55	73	65	63
% children benefitting from early education places in England	62	72	74	75
% 2-year olds in funded early education with Good/Outstanding providers in Reading	97	97	96	95
% 2-year olds in funded early education with Good/Outstanding providers in England	97	96	96	97
% 2 3 & 4 year olds benefitting from providers with staff with EYPS in Reading	49	42	35	41
% 2 3 & 4 year olds benefitting from providers with staff with EYPS in England	51	51	51	51

Chart 1: EYFS Good Level Development benchmark three-year outcomes trend all pupils NEXUS

% Good Level of Development

Domain ● LA - Reading ● National ● Regional - South East

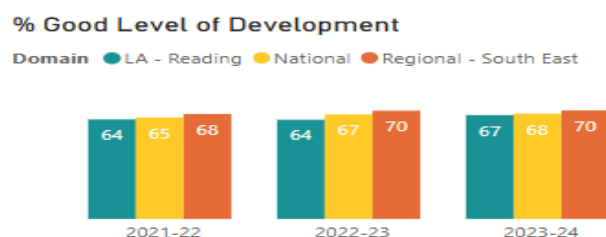|	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
LA - Reading	64	64	67
National	65	67	68
Regional - South East	68	70	70

Table 4: Improvement band and rank compared with national benchmarks and statistical neighbours for 2023-24. Data source: Reading Matrix March 2025

	Quartile Band A-D	2023-24 YoY Improvement Rank	Quartile Band A-D	Latest Statistical Neighbours' Average Performance (excluding this LA)	Latest Performance compared with Statistical Neighbour Group
Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)					
Expected standard across all early learning goals	B	9	A	66.0	↓
Good level of development	B	5	A	67.6	↓

Table 5: EYFS GLD outcomes trends compared to national and regional benchmarks for vulnerable groups 2023-24. Data Source: NEXUS

		Good Level of Development		
Domain	**Pupil Group**	**Value**	**Value Trend**	**%tile Rank**
National	All Pupils	68%	+1%	
Southeast	All Pupils	68%	0%	
LA: All Schools - Reading	All Pupils	67%	+3%	60
National	Disadvantaged	52%	+-1%	
Southeast	Disadvantaged	52%	+0%	
LA: All Schools - Reading	Disadvantaged	55%	+1%	28
National	Non-Disadvantaged	71%	+1%	
Southeast	Non-Disadvantaged	72%	+1%	
LA: All Schools - Reading	Non-Disadvantaged	69%	+3%	66
National	SEN No Recorded Provision	76%	+2%	
Southeast	SEN No Recorded Provision	77%	+2%	
LA: All Schools - Reading	SEN No Recorded Provision	76%	+6%	50
National	SEN Support	25%	+1%	
Southeast	SEN Support	28%	+2%	2%
LA: All Schools - Reading	SEN Support	28%	+1%	35
National	SEN EHCP	4%	0%	
Southeast	SEN EHCP	4%	0%	0%
LA: All Schools - Reading	SEN EHCP	0%	-8%	100
National	World Majority Ethnicity	66%	+1%	
Southeast	World Majority Ethnicity	67%	+0%	0%
LA: All Schools - Reading	World Majority Ethnicity	67%	+3%	42

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Table 6: EYFS GLD outcomes 2023-24 by primary school. Data Source: Power BI

Setting Name	All Pupils %GLD	Disadv. %GLD	Disadv. Not SEN %GLD	EHCP %GLD	SEN %GLD	Not SEN %GLD	EAL %GLD	EAL Not SEN %GLD	BCRB %GLD	BCRB Not SEN %GLD	WBRI %GLD	WBRI Not SEN %GLD
Alfred Sutton Primary	69.3%	50.0%	55.6%	0%	25.0%	72.3%	73.5%	75.0%			75.0%	75.0%
All Saints Church of England Aided Infant	65.0%					65.0%	50.0%	50.0%			66.7%	66.7%
Battle Primary Academy	62.7%	58.3%	77.8%	0%	0%	77.1%	58.6%	68.0%			75.0%	85.7%
Caversham Park Primary	60.0%					60.0%	66.7%	66.7%			50.0%	50.0%
Caversham Primary	66.7%	66.7%	100.0%		16.7%	79.2%	69.2%	90.0%			74.1%	82.6%
Christ The King Catholic Primary	59.0%	40.0%	66.7%	0%	37.5%	80.0%	50.0%	81.8%	100.0%	100.0%	66.7%	85.7%
Churchend Primary	69.5%	66.7%	77.8%		20.0%	74.1%	66.7%	76.5%			81.0%	81.0%
Civitas Academy	75.4%	83.3%	83.3%	0%	0%	79.6%	77.5%	81.6%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Coley Primary	69.0%	75.0%	100.0%		40.0%	75.0%	68.8%	78.6%			75.0%	100.0%
E P Collier Primary	64.4%	60.0%	75.0%		16.7%	71.8%	61.5%	68.2%	0%		40.0%	40.0%
Emmer Green Primary	73.3%				0%	75.9%	73.3%	78.6%	0%	0%	72.5%	76.3%
English Martyrs' Catholic Primary	68.4%	75.0%	75.0%	0%	0%	79.6%	40.0%	57.1%	100.0%	100.0%	78.6%	78.6%
Geoffrey Field Infant	70.5%	68.2%	91.7%	0%	35.3%	82.4%	62.2%	77.8%	0%		81.5%	90.5%
Green Park Village Primary Academy	78.6%	60.0%	60.0%	0%	50.0%	82.1%	83.3%	87.0%			75.0%	75.0%
Katesgrove Primary	67.1%	75.0%	75.0%	0%	0%	72.2%	61.9%	68.4%			90.9%	90.9%
Manor Primary	64.1%	58.3%	58.3%	0%	50.0%	71.0%	54.5%	66.7%			62.5%	75.0%
Meadow Park Academy	66.7%	75.0%	66.7%		100.0%	63.0%	60.0%	50.0%	0%	0%	81.8%	77.8%
Micklands Primary	64.9%	38.5%	62.5%	0%	16.7%	76.7%	61.5%	72.7%			81.8%	100.0%
Moorlands Primary	62.9%	57.1%	66.7%	0%	50.0%	66.7%	42.9%	60.0%			73.7%	73.7%
New Christ Church Church of England Primary	59.1%	20.0%	100.0%	0%	12.5%	92.3%	53.3%	88.9%			25.0%	100.0%
New Town Primary	72.3%	100.0%	100.0%		0%	75.6%	61.5%	61.5%			100.0%	100.0%
Oxford Road Community	58.1%	44.4%	57.1%		14.3%	70.8%	66.7%	80.0%			40.0%	66.7%
Park Lane Primary	74.5%	30.0%	28.6%	0%	50.0%	78.0%	100.0%	100.0%			71.8%	75.0%
Ranikhet Primary	75.0%	70.0%	70.0%		70.0%	77.8%	100.0%	100.0%			37.5%	40.0%
Redlands Primary	62.1%	33.3%	40.0%		0%	69.2%	55.0%	61.1%			100.0%	100.0%
Southcote Primary	62.5%	75.0%	100.0%	0%	0%	73.5%	40.0%	44.4%			88.9%	88.9%
St Anne's Catholic Primary	75.0%	50.0%	50.0%		100.0%	73.3%	85.7%	83.3%			50.0%	50.0%
St John's CofE (Aided) Primary	61.1%	41.7%	45.5%		0%	63.5%	66.7%	69.0%			50.0%	50.0%
St Martin's Catholic Primary	69.2%				50.0%	72.7%	33.3%	33.3%			85.7%	100.0%
St Mary and All Saints CofE VA Primary	53.3%	40.0%	60.0%	0%	33.3%	64.7%	63.2%	75.0%			45.5%	62.5%
St Michael's Primary	62.3%	60.0%	66.7%		12.5%	71.1%	64.3%	72.7%	0%		63.0%	70.8%
Thameside Primary	60.4%	25.0%	66.7%	0%	0%	74.4%	52.9%	56.3%			66.7%	85.7%
The Heights Primary	82.4%	0%	0%		0%	84.0%	83.3%	83.3%			74.1%	76.9%
The Hill Primary	90.0%			0%	100.0%	91.2%	100.0%	100.0%			90.2%	92.1%
The Palmer Primary Academy	68.5%	50.0%	50.0%			68.5%	69.6%	69.6%				
The Ridgeway Primary	62.2%	50.0%	60.0%	0%	33.3%	70.0%	60.0%	60.0%			52.9%	66.7%
Whitley Park Primary & Nursery	63.9%	52.6%	77.8%	0%	40.0%	73.3%	65.0%	70.6%	100.0%	100.0%	72.7%	90.9%
Wilson Primary	61.7%	55.6%	57.1%		20.0%	65.5%	56.0%	56.0%			64.3%	75.0%

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Table 7: Impact of attendance on outcomes in Early years. Data Source: Nexus

Attendance	Cohort	Achieving GLD %	Attendance level and outcomes
95%+	820	78	8/10 achieve the standard
Persistently absent	398	45	5/10 achieve the standard
Severely Absent	14	0	0/10 achieve the standard

Narrative analysis standards in EYFS

- Early years education plays a crucial role in developing school readiness by providing children with a strong foundation for future learning. During time in nursery provision, children acquire essential skills such as language, executive function, literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional competencies. High-quality early education programs foster cognitive development, encouraging curiosity and critical thinking. Additionally, they help children develop routines, self-regulation, and positive attitudes towards learning and attendance in families.

- By engaging in structured activities and interactions with peers and educators, children build confidence and adaptability, which are vital for a smooth transition to formal schooling. Ultimately, early years education sets the stage for academic success and lifelong learning. Attendance at EYFS provision provides an opportunity for early identification and intervention in SEND.

- The proportion of three- and four-year-olds benefiting from early education has increased in Reading in the last year, bringing Reading in line with national performance. The quality of provision remains strong. Quality in two-year-old provision is also good and in line with national standards. The percentage of two-year-olds accessing provision is below figures for England. More two-year-old places are needed to ensure that children in Reading, particularly those who are vulnerable benefit from early education.

- From September more families will become entitled to 30 hours of education for their two-year-olds to support families into work. This will increase the need for places in both the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector, and state-maintained sector. Access to childcare entitlements could reduce the impact of poverty and provide a protective factor in reducing vulnerability within our population.

- Reading LA's Early Yars Foundation Stage Good Level of Development has increased by 3.0% from 63.8% in 2022/23 to 66.8% in 2023/24.This is equivalent to approximately 54 more pupils achieving a good level of development in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23. Outcomes are still below statistical neighbours and national averages, however improvement in this area is strong compared to national trends, indicating that school improvement actions undertaken by settings and schools, and the support provided by the authority and trusts, has been effective overall.

- Vulnerable children achieve well against national benchmarks for groups and year-on-year improvements continue for most groups. Gaps remain between vulnerable children and those that are not in these groups.

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- Children with EHCPs underperform in comparison with the national group benchmark. Some children in this group may not be in the right provision to support their development and this is being reviewed as part of the SEND strategy.

- There is variation in outcomes between schools. When contextual factors are considered including mobility, small cohort size and SEND most schools perform broadly in line with national benchmarks.

- Poor attendance significantly impacts children's attainment in EYFS. Schools with weaker attendance have lower outcomes.

- In locally maintained schools where results are weaker, standards visits and support has been offered to consider curriculum quality and school-to-school support.

5. Phonics, Year 1, working at expected levels

Chart 2: Phonics three-year outcomes trend against national benchmarks for all pupils. Data Source: Nexus
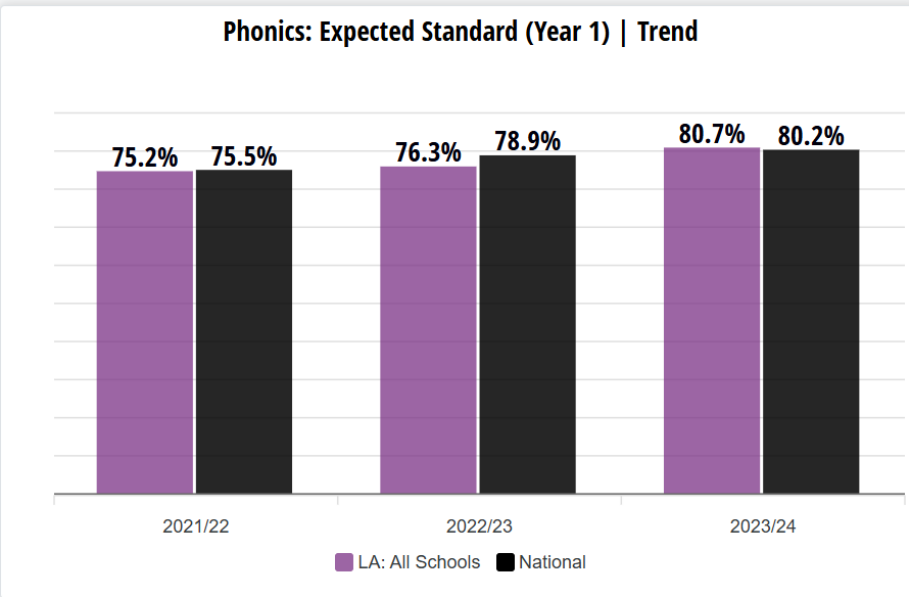

Phonics: Expected Standard (Year 1) | Trend

2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
75.2% 75.5%	76.3% 78.9%	80.7% 80.2%

■ LA: All Schools ■ National

Table 8: improvement band and rank compared with national benchmarks and statistical neighbours 2023-24. Data Source: Reading Matrix

Key Stage 1 Phonic Decoding Required Standard	2022-24 3Yr Improvement Rank	Quartile Band A-D	2023-24 YoY Improvement Rank	Quartile Band A-D		
Phonic Decoding	18	B	1	A	80.3	↑

Table 9: Phonics outcomes trends compared to national and regional benchmarks for vulnerable groups 2023-24. Data Source: NEXUS

Domain	Pupil Group	Expected Standard (Year 1) - Phonics Value	Expected Standard (Year 1) - Phonics Value Trend	Expected Standard (Year 1) - Phonics %tile Rank	Expected Standard (Year 1) - Phonics Cohort	Expected Standard (Year 2) - Phonics Value	Expected Standard (Year 2) - Phonics Value Trend	Expected Standard (Year 2) - Phonics %tile Rank	Expected Standard (Year 2) - Phonics Cohort
National	All Pupils	80%	1%		617170	55%	-4%		143540
Southeast	All Pupils	80%	2%		101310	56%	-3%		23390
LA: All Schools - Reading	All Pupils	81%	4%	45	1874	64%	0%	8	565
National	Disadvantaged	68%	1%		132810	49%	-4%		51800
Southeast	Disadvantaged	64%	2%		17700	48%	-4%		7720
LA: All Schools - Reading	Disadvantaged	74%	10%	18	388	59%	-3%	4	172
National	Non-Disadvantaged	84%	1%		470270	58%	-4%		88940
Southeast	Non-Disadvantaged	84%	2%		82630	60%	-3%		15440
LA: All Schools - Reading	Non-Disadvantaged	83%	3%	67	1486	66%	2%	9	393
National	SEN No Recorded Provision	88%	2%		509480	72%	-3%		72070
Southeast	SEN No Recorded Provision	88%	2%		84810	74%	-1%		12150
LA: All Schools - Reading	SEN No Recorded Provision	88%	4%	53	1495	82%	2%	5	301
National	SEN Support	52%	3%		74490	45%	-1%		45470
Southeast	SEN Support	50%	2%		11480	45%	0%		7250
LA: All Schools - Reading	SEN Support	55%	5%	38	209	55%	4%	13	134
National	SEN EHCP	20%	0%		22790	15%	0%		18830
Southeast	SEN EHCP	21%	0%		3660	15%	0%		3000
LA: All Schools - Reading	SEN EHCP	23%	10%	35	57	18%	-2%	30	66
National	World Majority Ethnicity	81%	1%		224460	58%	-3%		56260
Southeast	World Majority Ethnicity	81%	1%		31070	61%	-1%		7950
LA: All Schools - Reading	World Majority Ethnicity	83%	4%	27	1138	68%	1%	9	326

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Setting Name	All Pupils %GLD	Disadv. %GLD	Disadv. Not SEN %GLD	EHCP %GLD	SEN %GLD	Not SEN %GLD	EAL %GLD	EAL Not SEN %GLD	BCRB %GLD	BCRB Not SEN %GLD	WBRI %GLD	WBRI Not SEN %GLD
Alfred Sutton Primary	69.3%	50.0%	55.6%	0%	25.0%	72.3%	73.5%	75.0%			75.0%	75.0%
All Saints Church of England Aided Infant	65.0%					65.0%	50.0%	50.0%			66.7%	66.7%
Battle Primary Academy	62.7%	58.3%	77.8%	0%	0%	77.1%	58.6%	68.0%			75.0%	85.7%
Caversham Park Primary	60.0%					60.0%	66.7%	66.7%			50.0%	50.0%
Caversham Primary	66.7%	66.7%	100.0%		16.7%	79.2%	69.2%	90.0%			74.1%	82.6%
Christ The King Catholic Primary	59.0%	40.0%	66.7%	0%	37.5%	80.0%	50.0%	81.8%	100.0%	100.0%	66.7%	85.7%
Churchend Primary	69.5%	66.7%	77.8%		20.0%	74.1%	66.7%	76.5%			81.0%	81.0%
Civitas Academy	75.4%	83.3%	83.3%	0%	0%	79.6%	77.5%	81.6%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Coley Primary	69.0%	75.0%	100.0%		40.0%	75.0%	68.8%	78.6%			75.0%	100.0%
E P Collier Primary	64.4%	60.0%	75.0%		16.7%	71.8%	61.5%	68.2%	0%		40.0%	40.0%
Emmer Green Primary	73.3%				0%	75.9%	73.3%	78.6%	0%	0%	72.5%	76.3%
English Martyrs' Catholic Primary	68.4%	75.0%	75.0%	0%	0%	79.6%	40.0%	57.1%	100.0%	100.0%	78.6%	78.6%
Geoffrey Field Infant	70.5%	68.2%	91.7%	0%	35.3%	82.4%	62.2%	77.8%	0%		81.5%	90.5%
Green Park Village Primary Academy	78.6%	60.0%	60.0%	0%	50.0%	82.1%	83.3%	87.0%			75.0%	75.0%
Katesgrove Primary	67.1%	75.0%	75.0%	0%	0%	72.2%	61.9%	68.4%			90.9%	90.9%
Manor Primary	64.1%	58.3%	58.3%	0%	50.0%	71.0%	54.5%	66.7%			62.5%	75.0%
Meadow Park Academy	66.7%	75.0%	66.7%		100.0%	63.0%	60.0%	50.0%	0%	0%	81.8%	77.8%
Micklands Primary	64.9%	38.5%	62.5%	0%	16.7%	76.7%	61.5%	72.7%			81.8%	100.0%
Moorlands Primary	62.9%	57.1%	66.7%	0%	50.0%	66.7%	42.9%	60.0%			73.7%	73.7%
New Christ Church Church of England Primary	59.1%	20.0%	100.0%	0%	12.5%	92.3%	53.3%	88.9%			25.0%	100.0%
New Town Primary	72.3%	100.0%	100.0%		0%	75.6%	61.5%	61.5%			100.0%	100.0%
Oxford Road Community	58.1%	44.4%	57.1%		14.3%	70.8%	66.7%	80.0%			40.0%	66.7%
Park Lane Primary	74.5%	30.0%	28.6%	0%	50.0%	78.0%	100.0%	100.0%			71.8%	75.0%
Ranikhet Primary	75.0%	70.0%	70.0%		70.0%	77.8%	100.0%	100.0%			37.5%	40.0%
Redlands Primary	62.1%	33.3%	40.0%		0%	69.2%	55.0%	61.1%			100.0%	100.0%
Southcote Primary	62.5%	75.0%	100.0%	0%	0%	73.5%	40.0%	44.4%			88.9%	88.9%
St Anne's Catholic Primary	75.0%	50.0%	50.0%		100.0%	73.3%	85.7%	83.3%			50.0%	50.0%
St John's CofE (Aided) Primary	61.1%	41.7%	45.5%		0%	63.5%	66.7%	69.0%			50.0%	50.0%
St Martin's Catholic Primary	69.2%				50.0%	72.7%	33.3%	33.3%			85.7%	100.0%
St Mary and All Saints CofE VA Primary	53.3%	40.0%	60.0%	0%	33.3%	64.7%	63.2%	75.0%			45.5%	62.5%
St Michael's Primary	62.3%	60.0%	66.7%		12.5%	71.1%	64.3%	72.7%	0%		63.0%	70.8%
Thameside Primary	60.4%	25.0%	66.7%	0%	0%	74.4%	52.9%	56.3%			66.7%	85.7%
The Heights Primary	82.4%	0%	0%		0%	84.0%	83.3%	83.3%			74.1%	76.9%
The Hill Primary	90.0%			0%	100.0%	91.2%	100.0%	100.0%			90.2%	92.1%
The Palmer Primary Academy	68.5%	50.0%	50.0%			68.5%	69.6%	69.6%				
The Ridgeway Primary	62.2%	50.0%	60.0%	0%	33.3%	70.0%	60.0%	60.0%			52.9%	66.7%
Whitley Park Primary & Nursery	63.9%	52.6%	77.8%	0%	40.0%	73.3%	65.0%	70.6%	100.0%	100.0%	72.7%	90.9%
Wilson Primary	61.7%	55.6%	57.1%		20.0%	65.5%	56.0%	56.0%			64.3%	75.0%

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Table 11: impact of attendance on outcomes in phonics. Data Source: Power BI

Attendance	Cohort	Achieving Phonics WA Yr 1 %	
95%+	1035	87	9/10 achieve the standard
Persistently absent	347	64	6/10 achieve the standard
Severely Absent	11	27	3/10 achieve the standard

Narrative analysis: standards in phonics

- 80.7% of the year 1 cohort achieved the expected standard 0.5% higher than the National average of 80.2%. The proportion of children achieving the expected standard has increased by 4.4% from 76.3% in 2022/23 This is equivalent to approximately 82 more pupils achieving the expected standard in 2023/24.

- The National average increased by 1.3% during the same period indicating strong school improvement impact in Reading. Reading is in percentile 45 when compared to all LAs nationally for Year 1 expected standard in phonics and is in performance quartile A.

- School effectiveness visits and curriculum reviews evidence effective curriculum design and rigorous implementation and monitoring of this area in our schools. The writing element of phonics has also been strengthened in the last year and there have been improvements across KS1 in reading and writing outcomes.

- Reading's performance for vulnerable groups in both Year 1 and Year 2 phonics screening checks is generally higher than the national benchmarks. Disadvantaged pupils, SEN pupils, and EAL pupils in Reading tend to perform better than their counterparts nationally. The positive trends in Reading's performance indicate effective strategies and support systems in place for these groups.

- Once SEND is accounted for, there is only moderate variation between schools. Three schools could be considered negative outliers. In two of these schools, pupil mobility impacts outcomes.

- Attendance impacts phonics outcomes but arguably less than in other subjects. Schools have sophisticated intervention systems for phonics and rightly prioritise early reading so that children receive daily additional phonics to help them keep up even where they miss school.

6. Key Stage 1

- 2023 was the last year for KS1 national reporting. Many Reading schools continued to assess children at the end of KS1 to ensure they had made sufficient curriculum progress from early years and are attaining curriculum goals. There is no nationally available benchmark data for KS1.

- In LA maintained schools where we have data available, upwards trends in all subjects were evident. This mirrors evidence seen in school effectiveness visits and the impact of school's work on curriculum design, sequencing and implementation. Standards and improvement trends in schools that have rigorously focused on curriculum quality have been higher.

- In writing, Reading outcomes have improved by 8% over the last three years compared to a 5% improvement in national results. This has reduced the gap to overall local authority level averages from 6% in 2021/22 to 3% in 2023-24.

- In both maths and reading, reading outcomes have improved with gap to all Local Authority averages falling from 3% to 1.5%.

7. Key Stage 2

Chart 3: Three-year outcomes trend all pupils at the expected standard at the end of KS2 against regional and national benchmarks. Data Source: Power BI

Chart 4: Three-year outcomes trend all pupils at greater depth at the end of KS2 against regional and national benchmarks. Data Source: Power BI

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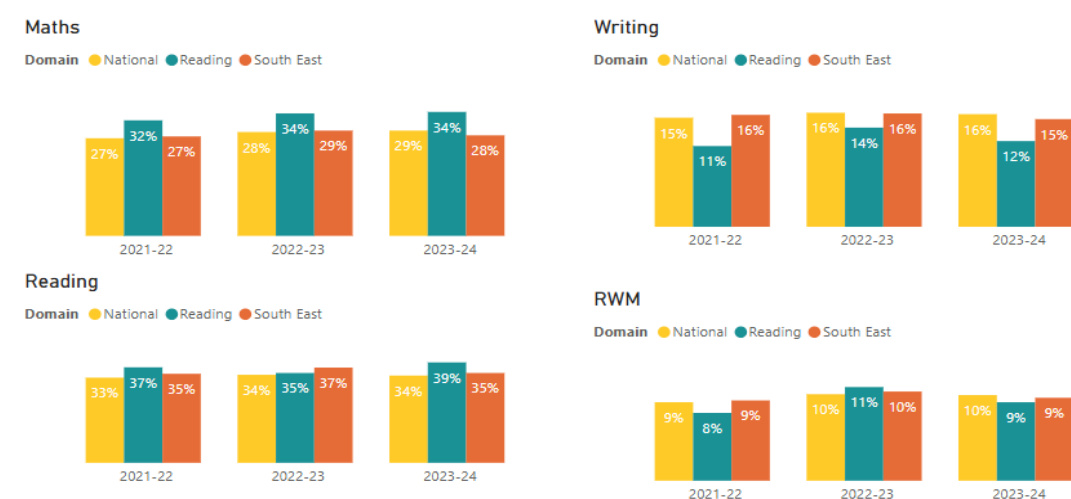
Table 12: comparison to national benchmarks and local authority rank by assessment subject. Data Source: NEXUS

	VALUE	GAP to national	TREND	%ILE
RWM Expected Standard	59.6%	-1.7%	+3.0%	65th
RWM High Standard	7.0%	-0.8%	-1.5%	65th
Reading Expected Standard	74.5%	-0.6%	+3.3%	57th
Writing Expected Standard	67.4%	-5.0%	+0.6%	90th
Maths Expected Standard	73.5%	-0.2%	+1.9%	51st
GPS Expected Standard	71.5%	-1.4%	+0.2%	66th
Reading High Standard	33.0%	+4.1%	+3.8%	28th
Writing Greater Depth	9.7%	-3.4%	-1.7%	78th
Maths High Standard	28.2%	+4.0%	+0.4%	33rd
GPS High Standard	35.9%	+3.5%	+3.8%	35th
Reading Scaled Score	105.8	+0.5	+0.7	49th
Maths Scaled Score	104.9	+0.5	+0.5	49th

Table 13: improvement band and rank KS2 2003-24 compared with national benchmarks and statistical neighbours. Source: Reading Matrix March 2025

National curriculum assessments at key stage 2	2022-24 3Yr Improvement Rank	Quartile Band A-D	2023-24 YoY Improvement Rank	Quartile Band A-D
RWM - Expected Standard All Pupils	5	A	14	A
RWM - Higher Standard All Pupils	27	C	100	
Expected standard Reading – All Pupils	6	A	5	A
Expected standard G.P.S – All Pupils	7	A	22	B
Expected standard Maths – All Pupils	11	A	31	B
Higher standard Reading – All Pupils	25	B	4	
Higher standard G.P.S – All Pupils	96	D	18	A
Higher standard Maths – All Pupils	43	C	53	C
Average Scaled Score Reading – All Pupils				
Average Scaled Score G.P.S – All Pupils				
Average Scaled Score Maths – All Pupils				
Eligible pupils scoring full marks in the multiplication tables check - All Pupils (%)	87	C	69	C
Total average attainment score in the multiplication tables check - All Pupils	79	C	30	B

Chart 5: RWM outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, three-year trend in Reading and against national and regional benchmarks 2021-2024. Data Source: Nexus

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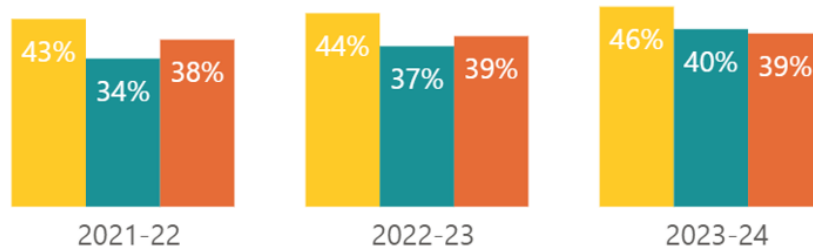|	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
National	43%	44%	46%
Reading	34%	37%	40%
South East	38%	39%	39%

Table 14: KS2 RWM expected standard outcomes for vulnerable groups 2022-23. Data Source: NEXUS

Domain	Pupil Group	RWM Expected Standard - Key Stage 2 Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	RWM High Standard - Key Stage 2 Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	Reading Expected Standard - Key Stage 2 Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	Writing Expected Standard - Key Stage 2 Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	Maths Expected Standard - Key Stage 2 Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	GPS Expected Standard - Key Stage 2 Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank
National	All Pupils	61%	2%		8%	0%		75%	2%		72%	1%		74%	1%		73%	1%	
South East	All Pupils	61%	1%		8%	0%		76%	2%		72%	0%		73%	0%		71%	0%	
LA: All Schools	All Pupils	60%	3%	65	7%	-2%	65	75%	3%	57	67%	1%	90	74%	2%	51	72%	0%	66
National	Disadvantaged	46%	2%		3%	0%		63%	3%		59%	1%		60%	1%		60%	1%	
South East	Disadvantaged	41%	2%		2%	0%		60%	3%		55%	1%		54%	0%		53%	0%	
LA: All Schools	Disadvantaged	41%	5%	70	2%	-1%	79	61%	7%	64	51%	0%	88	56%	6%	68	54%	2%	81
National	Non-Disadvantaged	68%	2%		10%	0%		80%	2%		78%	1%		80%	1%		79%	0%	
South East	Non-Disadvantaged	67%	1%		10%	0%		81%	2%		78%	0%		79%	0%		77%	0%	
LA: All Schools	Non-Disadvantaged	66%	2%	65	9%	-2%	60	79%	1%	66	73%	0%	91	80%	0%	58	78%	-1%	66
National	not SEND	72%	2%		10%	0%		85%	3%		84%	1%		84%	1%		84%	1%	
South East	not SEND	72%	2%		10%	0%		86%	2%		84%	1%		83%	1%		82%	0%	
LA: All Schools	not SEND	71%	4%	65	9%	-2%	59	85%	5%	53	79%	1%	89	84%	2%	48	83%	0%	60
National	SEN Support	26%	2%		2%	0%		48%	3%		36%	3%		44%	2%		40%	2%	
South East	SEN Support	25%	3%		1%	0%		48%	4%		36%	3%		43%	2%		37%	2%	
LA: All Schools	SEN Support	31%	6%	30	2%	0%	57	51%	3%	39	37%	6%	49	51%	6%	30	44%	6%	35
National	SEN EHCP	9%	0%		1%	0%		19%	1%		12%	0%		17%	1%		17%	1%	
South East	SEN EHCP	9%	0%		0%	0%		21%	2%		12%	0%		17%	0%		16%	0%	
LA: All Schools	SEN EHCP	7%	1%	65	0%	0%	100	17%	0%	63	9%	0%	78	12%	-2%	85	13%	-4%	80
National	world majority ethnicity	65%	3%		9%	0%		76%	4%		75%	2%		78%	2%		78%	2%	
South East	world majority ethnicity	65%	2%		10%	-1%		77%	2%		75%	1%		78%	0%		78%	0%	
LA: All Schools	world majority ethnicity	63%	4%	57	8%	-1%	66	77%	5%	44	71%	2%	76	78%	3%	47	77%	2%	56
National	EAL	65%	4%	n/a	9%	0%		75%	5%		74%	3%		79%	2%		78%	3%	
South East	EAL	65%	3%	n/a	10%	0%	n/a	76%	3%	n/a	75%	1%		80%	1%		78%	0%	
LA: All Schools	EAL	65%	4%	42	8%	-2%	53	76%	3%	37	72%	2%	63	81%	2%	37	79%	2%	34

Table 15: KS2 RWM expected standard outcomes overall and for vulnerable groups 2022-23 by Primary School. Data Source: Power BI

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School Name	cohort	All Pupils %RWM	cohort	Disadvantaged %RWM	cohort	Disadv. No SEN RWM%	cohort	EHCP %RWM	cohort	SEN support %RWM	cohort	No SEN %RWM	cohort	EAL %RWM	cohort	BCRB %RWM	cohort	WBRI %RWM
Alfred Sutton Primary School	90	81.1%	4	100.0%	3	100.0%			14	57.1%	76	85.5%	9	88.9%			13	100.0%
All Saints Junior School	25	92.0%	3	100.0%	2	100.0%			6	66.7%	19	100.0%	4	100.0%			15	93.3%
Battle Primary Academy	60	65.0%	14	57.1%	11	72.7%	1	0.0%	4	0.0%	55	70.9%	18	72.2%			7	42.9%
Caversham Park Primary School	23	60.9%	2	50.0%	2	50.0%			5	20.0%	18	72.2%	1	100.0%			8	75.0%
Caversham Primary School	60	68.3%	4	25.0%	3	33.3%	3	0.0%	8	37.5%	49	77.6%	5	100.0%			38	71.1%
Christ The King Catholic Primary Scho	47	46.8%	13	23.1%	4	25.0%	7	14.3%	13	30.8%	27	63.0%	15	33.3%	1	0.0%	11	54.5%
Civitas Academy	60	51.7%	13	38.5%	10	40.0%	1	0.0%	12	16.7%	43	67.4%	37	51.4%			8	62.5%
Coley Primary School	30	46.7%	8	37.5%	3	66.7%	3	0.0%	7	28.6%	20	60.0%	15	53.3%			10	40.0%
Emmer Green Primary School	59	62.7%	5	0.0%	3	0.0%	2	0.0%	6	16.7%	51	70.6%	8	87.5%			33	60.6%
English Martyrs' Catholic Primary Sch	64	51.6%	11	27.3%	4	75.0%	5	0.0%	13	23.1%	46	65.2%	15	53.3%			20	25.0%
Geoffrey Field Junior School	86	61.6%	21	47.6%	15	60.0%	5	0.0%	11	63.6%	70	65.7%	8	75.0%	1	0.0%	24	58.3%
Katesgrove Primary School	89	59.6%	13	30.8%	7	57.1%	2	0.0%	10	0.0%	75	70.7%	28	64.3%	1	0.0%	16	56.3%
Manor Primary School	42	66.7%	14	57.1%	11	63.6%	4	25.0%	5	60.0%	32	75.0%	4	50.0%			20	70.0%
Meadow Park Academy	57	49.1%	26	30.8%	18	44.4%	1	0.0%	14	0.0%	42	66.7%	19	73.7%	1	0.0%	26	30.8%
Micklands Primary School	59	52.5%	10	40.0%	5	40.0%	2	0.0%	10	40.0%	47	57.4%	5	80.0%			29	48.3%
New Christ Church Church of England	28	50.0%	3	0.0%	2	0.0%	1	0.0%	4	0.0%	23	60.9%	15	46.7%			4	50.0%
New Town Primary School	58	53.4%	12	16.7%	7	28.6%	2	0.0%	8	0.0%	46	67.4%	46	52.2%			1	0.0%
Oxford Road Community School	30	56.7%	7	57.1%	4	75.0%	2	0.0%	3	33.3%	24	66.7%	19	52.6%	1	100.0%	1	0.0%
Park Lane Primary School	60	66.7%	12	50.0%	10	50.0%	1	0.0%	10	40.0%	49	73.5%	2	50.0%			43	65.1%
Ranikhet Primary School	37	45.9%	19	31.6%	14	42.9%			8	25.0%	28	53.6%	18	44.4%	1	0.0%	6	16.7%
Redlands Primary School	30	86.7%	2	100.0%	2	100.0%			2	100.0%	28	85.7%	6	50.0%			6	100.0%
Southcote Primary School	88	52.3%	6	33.3%	6	33.3%	3	0.0%	7	14.3%	77	58.4%	11	63.6%			23	52.2%
St John's CofE (Aided) Primary Schoo	60	71.7%	9	33.3%	3	100.0%	3	66.7%	14	42.9%	42	83.3%	37	67.6%	1	0.0%	8	62.5%
St Martin's Catholic Primary School	21	76.2%	1	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	0.0%	1	100.0%	19	78.9%	2	50.0%			8	75.0%
St Michael's Primary School	59	52.5%	11	36.4%	9	44.4%			9	33.3%	49	57.1%	6	33.3%			21	47.6%
Thameside Primary School	58	58.6%	11	18.2%	4	50.0%	9	0.0%	6	50.0%	43	72.1%	7	71.4%			36	52.8%
The Heights Primary School	48	79.2%	2	50.0%			1	0.0%	13	69.2%	34	85.3%	7	85.7%			34	73.5%
The Hill Primary School	59	66.1%	5	40.0%	3	66.7%	3	0.0%	15	60.0%	41	73.2%	15	86.7%			32	56.3%
The Palmer Primary Academy	58	53.4%	22	31.8%	1	0.0%					1	0.0%	26	65.4%			20	45.0%
The Ridgeway Primary School	58	55.2%	17	58.8%	12	75.0%	5	20.0%	12	8.3%	40	75.0%	21	57.1%			16	50.0%
Whitley Park Primary & Nursery Scho	84	46.4%	20	35.0%	12	41.7%	3	0.0%	24	20.8%	56	60.7%	10	60.0%			26	42.3%
Wilson Primary School	59	47.5%	3	33.3%	2	50.0%	2	50.0%	7	0.0%	48	56.3%	12	66.7%			1	0.0%
Churchend Primary School	63	65.1%	10	30.0%	3	100.0%	1	0.0%	13	23.1%	49	77.6%	12	66.7%	2	50.0%	24	62.5%
E P Collier Primary School	60	60.0%	13	46.2%	8	62.5%	7	0.0%	8	37.5%	42	76.2%	21	52.4%	1	100.0%	11	36.4%
Moorlands Primary School	58	62.1%	26	57.7%	17	76.5%	1	0.0%	10	20.0%	44	77.3%	11	45.5%	1	100.0%	26	57.7%
St Anne's Catholic Primary School	28	39.3%	5	60.0%	3	100.0%			5	0.0%	23	47.8%	10	30.0%	1	100.0%	7	42.9%
St Mary and All Saints CofE VA Prima	49	46.9%	16	43.8%	12	50.0%	1	0.0%	9	22.2%	38	55.3%	18	33.3%	2	100.0%	14	57.1%

Table 16: impact of attendance on outcomes in RWM Expected standard 2003-2004. Data Source: Power BI

Attendance	Cohort	Achieving % RWM expected standard	
95%+	1202	64%	6/10 achieve the standard
Persistently absent	278	40%	4/10 achieve the standard
Severely Absent	9	0%	0/10 achieve the standard
Attendance	Cohort	achieving % writing KS2 expected standard	
95%+	1202	72%	7/10 achieve the standard
Persistently absent	278	48%	4/10 achieve the standard
Severely Absent	9	0%	0/10 achieve the standard

Table 17: relationship between KS2 RWM outcomes, attendance, and cohort complexity. RAG shows cohort compared to National averages Darker colours indicate significant difference from average significant difference from average. **Data source: Ofsted IDSR DfE.**

School Name	RWMEXP Vs national performance	FSM6 %	SEND K%	SEND EHCP %	EAL %	Stability	pupil base deprivation	location deprivation	Persistant absence %	% CWSW Pupils	% CIN	budget RAG LA 23-24
Alfred Sutton Primary School	1 well above average	average	average	below average	well above average	well below average	below average	average	well above average	1.1%	0.7%	Surplus > 5%
All Saints Junior	1 well above average	well below average	average	well above average	well above average	well above average	average	average	well below average	0.0%	0.0%	
Redlands Primary School	1 well above average	below average	below average	above average	well above average	well below average	below average	average	average	2.3%	0.0%	Deficits >5%
St John's CofE (Aided) Primary School	1 well above average	average	average	average	well above average	well below average	average	above average	average	3.0%	1.3%	Deficits >5%
St Martin's Catholic Primary School	1 well above average	well below average	below average	well below average	above average	well below average	well below average	well below average	average	3.1%	0.0%	Deficits >5%
The Heights Primary School	1 well above average	well below average	above average	below average	above average	above average	well below average	well below average	well below average	0.6%	0.6%	
Battle Primary Academy	2 above average	average	well below average	average	well above average	below average	average	average	average	0.4%	0.0%	
Caversham Primary School	2 above average	well below average	below average	well below average	above average	average	well below average	well below average	well below average	1.0%	0.5%	Deficits 0-5%
Churchend Primary Academy	2 above average	average	above average	above average	above average	above average	above average	well above average	average	2.6%	0.4%	
Manor Primary School	2 above average	well above average	above average	above average	above average	well below average	above average	average	well above average	5.1%	2.1%	Surplus 0-5%
Park Lane Primary School	2 above average	average	below average	below average	average	well below average	average	average	average	1.5%	0.5%	Surplus 0-5%
The Hill Primary School	2 above average	well below average	average	average	above average	below average	well below average	well below average	average	1.8%	1.3%	Surplus > 5%
Caversham Park Primary School	3 average	below average	well above average	below average	above average	well below average	well below average	well below average	average	0.8%	0.8%	Deficits >5%
E P Collier Primary School	3 average	average	above average	well above average	well above average	well below average	average	below average	well above average	1.0%	0.2%	Surplus > 5%
Emmer Green Primary School	3 average	well below average	well below average	average	well above average	well below average	average	below average	average	0.7%	0.0%	Deficits 0-5%
Geoffrey Field Junior	3 average	above average	above average	above average	above average	well above average	above average	well above average	average	1.4%	0.8%	Surplus > 5%
Moorlands Primary School	3 average	well above average	above average	average	above average	below average	above average	above average	well above average	4.9%	2.0%	Surplus 0-5%
Katesgrove Primary School	4 below average	below average	well below average	below average	well above average	well above average	average	average	average	1.6%	0.3%	Surplus 0-5%
Micklands Primary School	4 below average	above average	average	average	above average	average	average	well below average	average	1.8%	0.6%	Deficits >5%
New Town Academy	4 below average	average	average	average	well above average	well below average	average	average	average	2.5%	1.4%	
Oxford Road Primary School	4 below average	above average	average	well below average	well above average		below average	above average	well above average	1.2%	0.8%	Surplus > 5%
Southcote Primary School	4 below average	average	well below average	above average	above average	below average	average	average	average	1.1%	0.4%	Surplus 0-5%
St Michael's Primary School	4 below average	above average	average	average	well below average	below average	above average	well above average	average	4.3%	1.5%	Surplus > 5%
Thameside Primary School	4 below average	average	above average	well above average	above average	average	average	average	average	3.7%	2.1%	Deficits >5%
The Palmer Primary Academy	4 below average	above average	average	average	well above average	well below average	above average	above average	well above average	3.2%	1.7%	
The Ridgeway Primary School	4 below average	above average	well above average	above average	above average	well below average	above average	above average	well above average	2.6%	1.2%	Surplus 0-5%
Christ The King Catholic Primary School	5 well below average	well below average	well below average	well below average	well below average	well below average	above average	above average	average	4.5%	1.8%	Surplus > 5%
Civitas Academy	5 well below average	below average	average	average	well above average	well below average	above average	above average	well above average	2.4%	0.7%	
Coley Primary School	5 well below average	average	well above average	average	well above average	well below average	average	above average	well above average	3.1%	2.0%	Deficits 0-5%
English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School	5 well below average	average	average	average	well above average	average	above average	above average	average	3.9%	1.4%	Surplus 0-5%
Meadow Park Academy	5 well below average	well above average	well above average	below average	above average	well below average	above average	average	average	0.8%	0.6%	
New Christ Church CofE (VA) Primary School	5 well below average	below average	well above average	above average	well above average	well below average	above average	average	average	1.5%	1.0%	
Ranikhet Academy	5 well below average	well above average	well above average	well above average	well above average	well above average	above average	above average	well above average	0.4%	0.4%	
St Anne's RC Catholic Primary School	5 well below average	above average	average	below average	well above average	well below average	average	below average	average	2.2%	0.0%	Deficits >5%
St Mary and All Saints CofE (VA) Primary School	5 well below average	above average	well above average	well above average	well above average	well below average	above average	above average	well above average	3.8%	1.5%	
Whitley Park Primary & Nursery School	5 well below average	above average	well above average	average	well above average	well below average	well above average	well above average	well above average	2.1%	0.7%	Deficits 0-5%
Wilson Primary School	5 well below average	below average	well above average	above average	well above average	average	below average	average	average	3.3%	0.9%	Surplus > 5%
									Loal average 2.1%	Local average 0.8%		
										2.2%	0.9%	

Narrative analysis: standards in KS2

- As a result of the Pandemic disrupting KS1 assessment in summer 2020-22 there are no KS2 progress reports or benchmarks available for schools in 2023-24.

- Reading's schools have made progress in improving the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in RWM, with notable gains in individual subjects like reading, maths, and GPS. The gap between national performance and Reading LA has reduced over the last three years indicating that the consistent approaches to school improvement adopted by many schools are being effective in raising standards.

- There are, however, persistent challenges, particularly for disadvantaged pupils with SEND and for children who are persistently absent from school, children who have a social worker and children who are of Black Carbbean Heritage. Writing remains a weakness with

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significant gaps to national attainment and reduced rate of progress from previous years overall. Targeted interventions and support are being secured to address these gaps and ensure all pupils can meet national benchmarks.

- the 2023/24 academic year, Reading's LA averages saw a notable improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing, and Maths (RWM). The percentage increased by 3.0%, rising from 56.6% in 2022/23 to 59.6% in 2023/24. Despite this progress, Reading's performance remains 1.7% below the national average of 61.3%. This gap translates to approximately 33 fewer pupils meeting the expected standard compared to the national benchmark.

- While 7.0% of pupils in Reading achieved the higher standard in RWM, this is 0.8% lower than the national average of 7.8%. However, Reading's schools show strong performance in achieving high standards in individual subjects like reading, maths, and GPS (Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling), with positive trends indicating continuous improvement.

- 41.4% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in RWM, which is 26.0% lower than the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils (67.4%). However, this cohort's outcomes increased by 4.9% this year, narrowing the gap to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally by 3.8%. Reading performed well in improvement in this area and Disadvantaged children's outcomes in Reading are now better that outcomes for disadvantaged children in the region. 56.4% of disadvantaged children without SEND met the standard and performance of this group improved by 7.8% over the period.

- 61.3% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard in reading, which is 18.4% lower than the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils (79.7%). The gap reduced by 5.8% from the previous year. Reading disadvantaged children without SEND performed above the same group nationally.

- 50.6% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in writing, which is 27.0% lower than the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils (77.6%). The gap increased slightly by 0.2%. 54.0% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard in GPS, which is 24.2% lower than the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils (78.2%). The gap reduced by 2.4%. Improvements in phonics and KS1 for this group were improved and disadvantaged children without SEND.

- 56.1% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in maths, which is 23.3% lower than the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils (79.4%). The gap reduced by 5.3% in 2023/24.

- More Reading children with SEND achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (24%) compared to national (22%). This performance was driven by good performance of children with SEN support. outcomes for children with an EHCP were weaker.

- 30.6% of pupils with SEN support achieved the expected standard in RWM, which is 30.1% lower than the national average for all pupils (60.7%). However, this is 4.9% higher than the national average for the SEN support group, with the gap reducing by 4.7%.

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- 51.1% of pupils with SEN support met the expected standard in reading, which is 23.3% lower than the national average for all pupils (74.4%). The gap reduced by 1.0%.

- 36.6% of pupils with SEN support achieved the expected standard in writing, which is 35.1% lower than the national average for all pupils (71.7%). The gap reduced by 5.5%. 44.1% of pupils with SEN support met the expected standard in GPS, which is 28.2% lower than the national average for all pupils (72.3%). The gap reduced by 5.8%.

- 50.5% of pupils with SEN support achieved the expected standard in Maths, which is 22.7% lower than the national average for all pupils (73.2%). The gap reduced by 5.5%.

- 7.3% of pupils with SEN EHCP achieved the expected standard in RWM, which is 53.4% lower than the national average for all pupils (60.7%). The gap decreased slightly by 0.1%.

- 17.1% of pupils with SEN EHCP met the expected standard in Reading, which is 57.3% lower than the national average for all pupils (74.4%). The gap decreased by 1.3%.

- 8.9% of pupils with SEN EHCP achieved the expected standard in writing, which is 62.8% lower than the national average for all pupils (71.7%). The gap remained relatively unchanged.13.0% of pupils with SEN EHCP met the expected standard in GPS, which is 59.3% lower than the national average for all pupils (72.3%). The gap increased by 3.7%.

- 12.2% of pupils with SEN EHCP achieved the expected standard in Maths, which is 61.0% lower than the national average for all pupils (73.2%). The gap increased by 2.2% last year.

- There is significant variation between schools. School effectiveness visits evidence that schools with stronger or improving performance have prioritised curriculum development, regular instructional coaching and monitoring, attendance monitoring and ensure that staff implement their behaviour curriculum consistently.

- Contextual factors impact performance and variation between schools. Overall schools with fewer contextual challenges perform significantly better than schools with contextual factors that are greater than national averages. Leaders in schools with complex cohorts often face recruitment and retention challenges and spend more time and resource on safeguarding and community initiatives.

- Complex schools receive significantly more grant funding than those with demographics that are in line with national averages, however, this often does not meet the costs of provision for children with complex needs and when exacerbated by falling rolls, an increasing number of schools face significant budget pressure.

- Attendance remains a key issue for some schools with outcomes significantly impacted by poor attendance. School effectiveness monitoring suggests strong compliance with national guidance, effective attendance monitoring and use of intervention. Improvements in overall figures for persistent absence have not been achieved in some schools despite this good practice being rigorously implemented.

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- Overall improvements in attendance for Reading schools over the last academic year is encouraging and supports the effectiveness of collective efforts to improve attendance in clusters.

8. Key Stage 4

Table 18: Readings overall performance and relative year on year improvement against national quintile band performance. Data Source: Reading Data Matrix

GCSE or equivalent	2024	Rank	Latest Quartile Band A-D	Latest Available England Average	2021-23 3Yr Improvement Rank	Quartile Band A-D	2022-24 3Yr Improvement Rank	Quartile Band A-D	2023-24 YoY Improvement Rank	Quartile Band A-D
Average Progress 8 score per pupil NB No Results for 2020 & 21	-0.02	67	B	-0.03				A	118	D
Average Attainment 8 score per pupil	48.80	34	A	46.1	107	C	98	C	138	D
% Pupils achieving 9-4 pass in English and Maths	66.70	57	B	65.4	79		11	A	46	B
% Pupils achieving 9-5 pass in English and Maths	50.30	40	B	46.2	93		14	A	101	C
% Pupils entered for English Baccalaureate	47.70	35	A	40.6	14	A	26	A	23	A
English Baccalaureate Average Point Score	4.47	28	A	4.09	62		80		125	D
% Pupils achieving Eng Bacc (inc 9-4 pass in E&M)	31.90	31	A	25.4	16	A	74	B	86	C
% Pupils achieving Eng Bacc (inc 9-5 pass in E&M)	25.90	21	A	18.1	124	D	60	B	39	B

Chart 6: Three-year trends in Attainment 8 against national and regional benchmarks. Data source: Power BI

Domain ● LA: All Schools - Reading ● National: All Schools ● Regional: All Schools - South East

2021-22: 52, 49, 50
2022-23: 50, 46, 47
2023-24: 49, 46, 47
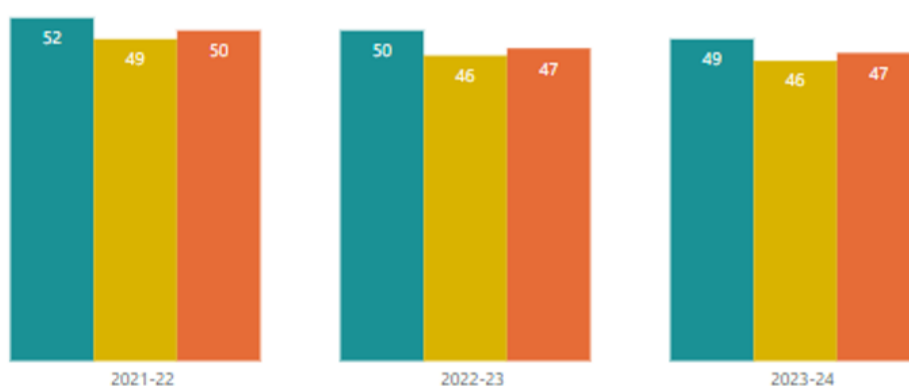
Chart 7: Three-year trends in Progress 8 against national and regional benchmarks. Data source Power BI

Domain ● LA: All Schools - Reading ● National: All Schools ● Regional: All Schools - South East

2021-22: -0.090, -0.030, -0.030
2022-23: 0.030, -0.030, -0.020
2023-24: -0.020, -0.060, -0.070
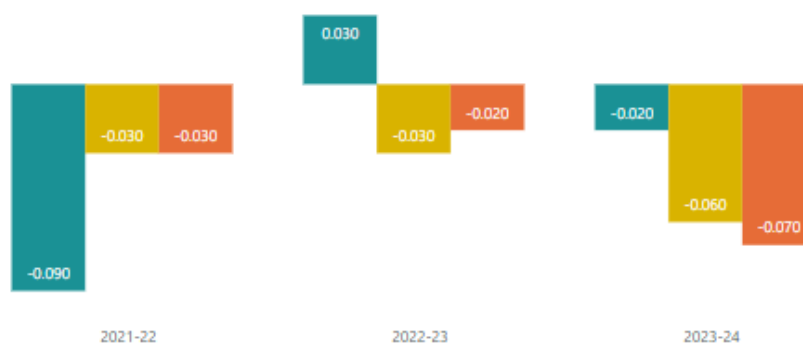
Chart 8: Three-year trends in GCSE 4+ English and Maths against national and regional benchmarks. Data source: Power BI

Domain ● LA: All Schools - Reading ● National: All Schools ● Regional: All Schools - South East

	2021-22			2022-23			2023-24	
67.2%	68.8%	70.9%	66.0%	65.1%	67.5%	66.7%	64.4%	66.1%
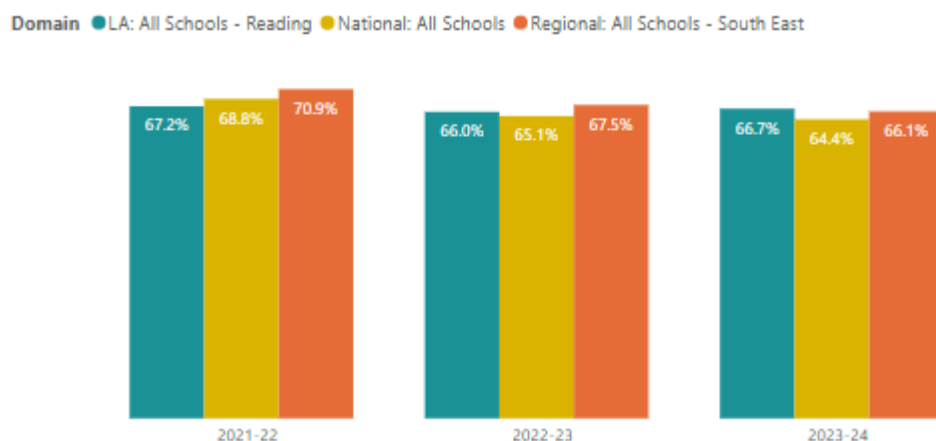
Table 19: Reading performance in all performance areas, gap to national, National rank and improvement trend 2023-24. Data Source: Nexus

MEASURE	VALUE	GAP TO NATIONAL	TREND	%
Progress 8	-0.02	0.00	-0.05	51st
Attainment 8	48.8	+2.6	-1.3	33rd
EBacc APS	4.47	+0.37	-0.05	27th
EBacc Entered	47.7%	+7.1%	+4.0%	25th
English & Maths 5+	50.3%	+4.0%	+0.3%	29th
Att8: English	10.2	+0.3	-0.2	50th
Att8: Maths	10.1	+0.9	0.0	33rd
Att8: EBacc	14.7	+1.2	-0.3	30th
Att8: Other	13.8	+0.2	-0.9	54th
Prog: English	-0.05	-0.01	-0.05	55th
Prog: Maths	+0.14	+0.16	+0.03	32nd
Prog: EBacc	+0.07	+0.10	-0.04	40th
Prog: Other	-0.22	-0.19	-0.13	73rd
EBacc APS: English	5.09	+0.17	-0.06	38th
EBacc APS: Maths	5.03	+0.45	-0.02	20th
EBacc APS: Science	4.91	+0.42	-0.08	25th

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EBacc APS: Humanities	3.90	+0.12	-0.12	40th
EBacc APS: Languages	2.97	+0.66	+0.04	24th
EBacc Entered: English	93.8%	-0.6%	-0.4%	57th
EBacc Entered: Maths	97.0%	+0.5%	-0.1%	33rd
EBacc Entered: Science	96.0%	+1.3%	-0.1%	21st
EBacc Entered: Humanities	78.7%	-3.4%	-0.7%	72nd
EBacc Entered: Languages	51.5%	+5.8%	+3.6%	28th
Entered: Triple Science	43.4%	+18.4%	-0.2%	3rd
EBacc 5+: English	62.0%	+1.2%	+0.5%	43rd
EBacc 5+: Maths	56.0%	+3.9%	-0.1%	32nd
EBacc 4+: English	73.9%	-1.2%	+0.3%	57th
EBacc 4+: Maths	71.8%	+1.4%	+0.5%	39th
English & Maths 4+	66.7%	+1.2%	+0.7%	43rd

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Table 20: performance variation between schools across headline performance measures. Data Source: Power BI

School Name	Average Overall Progress 8 Score	Average Overall Attainment 8 Score	% GCSE Basics Achieved 5+	% GCSE Basics Achieved 4+
National average	-0.06	46	45.10%	64.40%
UTC Reading	-0.81	40.7	47.2%	59.4%
The WREN School	-0.13	43.0	35.5%	60.2%
Reading School	0.89	81.1	100.0%	100.0%
Reading Girls' School Academy	0.00	47.8	54.0%	67.2%
Kings Academy Prospect	-0.41	38.2	28.3%	53.8%
Maiden Erlegh School in Reading	0.12	47.7	46.8%	71.7%
Kendrick School	1.07	84.4	100.0%	100.0%
John Madejski Academy	-0.92	31.8	22.4%	35.3%
Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre	0.25	53.5	61.0%	80.1%
Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School	-0.02	44.4	42.5%	61.5%

Chart 9: Disadvantaged P8 and A8 outcomes three-year trend against national and regional benchmarks. Data Source: Power BI
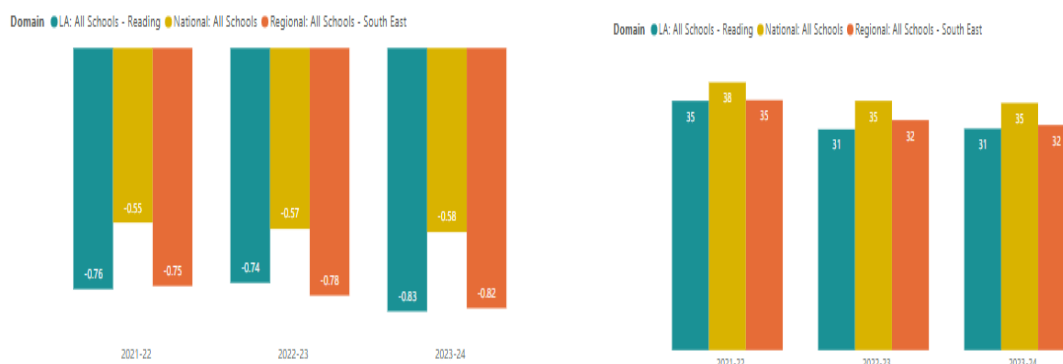
Table 21: LA vulnerable group performance in headline measures compared to national averages for the group. Green shading shows performance above the national average, red shading shows performance below the national average and yellow shading shows performance in line with the national average for the group. **Data Source: NEXUS**

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Domain	Pupil Group	Attainment 8 - Key Stage 4			Progress 8 - Key Stage 4			English & Maths 5+ - Key Stage 4			English & Maths 4+ - Key Stage 4		
		Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank	Value	Value Trend	%tile Rank
National	All Pupils	46.2	-0.1		-0.02	1%		46%	1%		66%	0%	
South East	All Pupils	47.4	0		-0.01	1%		49%	1%		68%	0%	
LA: All Schools - Read	All Pupils	48.8	-1.3	33	-0.02	-5%	51	50%	0%	29	67%	1%	43
National	Disadvantaged	34.7	-0.3		-0.57	0%		26%	1%		44%	0%	
South East	Disadvantaged	32.1	-0.2		-0.78	0%		22%	1%		39%	0%	
LA: All Schools - Read	Disadvantaged	31.1	0.1	85	-0.84	-10%	80	24%	3%	59	38%	3%	77
National	Non-Disadvantaged	50.3	0		0.17	0%		54%	1%		73%	1%	
South East	Non-Disadvantaged	51.1	0		0.18	2%		55%	1%		75%	0%	
LA: All Schools - Read	Non-Disadvantaged	54	-1.5	24	0.25	-3%	42	58%	0%	30	75%	0%	38
National	SEN No Recorded Provi	50.1	0.1		0.11	1%		52%	1%		73%	1%	
South East	SEN No Recorded Provi	51.5	0		0.13	2%		55%	1%		75%	0%	
LA: All Schools - Read	SEN No Recorded Provi	53.6	-0.8	27	0.17	-3%	40	58%	1%	29	74%	2%	40
National	SEN Support	33.2	-0.1		-0.44	1%		22%	1%		38%	1%	
South East	SEN Support	33.6	0.2		-0.47	4%		23%	1%		39%	1%	
LA: All Schools - Read	SEN Support	34.6	-0.9	42	-0.49	7%	55	26%	0%	29	44%	3%	28
National	SEN EHCP	14.2	0.2		-1.13	-1%		7%	0%		13%	0%	
South East	SEN EHCP	14.8	0.6		-1.18	0%		7%	0%		14%	1%	
LA: All Schools - Read	SEN EHCP	11.5	1.5	74	-1.64	-42%	97	5%	2%	74	11%	4%	69
National	World majority ehtnicit	49.9	0.7		0.35	2%		53%	2%		70%	2%	
South East	World majority ehtnicit	52.3	0.3		0.38	1%		57%	1%		74%	1%	
LA: All Schools - Read	World majority ehtnicit	52.9	-0.1	24	0.29	-1%	60	56%	1%	35	72%	3%	41
National	EAL	49.8	1.2		0.52	1%		52%	3%		70%	3%	
South East	EAL	52.5	0.5		0.58	3%		56%	2%		74%	1%	
LA: All Schools - Read	EAL	52.7	2.4	32	0.6	18%	46	54%	5%	38	72%	4%	44

Table 22: disadvantaged children KS4 performance by school 2023-24. Data Source Power BI

School Name	Average Overall Progress 8 Score	Average Overall Attainment 8 Score	% Ebacc Entered	% GCSE Basics Achieved 5+	% GCSE Basics Achieved 4+
UTC Reading	-1.3	25.9		16.7%	20.0%
The WREN School	-0.6	32.6	14.0%	20.9%	41.9%
Reading School	0.6	78.4	62.5%	100.0%	100.0%
Reading Girls' School Academy	-0.7	36.8	19.2%	30.8%	48.1%
Prospect School	-0.7	31.5	54.5%	19.5%	36.4%
Maiden Erlegh School in Reading	-0.7	34.0	29.3%	26.8%	36.6%
Kendrick School	0.2	72.4	57.1%	100.0%	100.0%
John Madejski Academy	-1.2	27.0	28.4%	20.9%	28.4%
Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre	-0.6	39.2	9.7%	29.0%	54.8%
Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School	-1.0	27.6	14.7%	20.6%	35.3%

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Table 23: Headline performance KS4 for children of Black Caribbean heritage in Reading compared to national averages for the group, local comparison groups and by school. Data source: NEXUS

centre	cohort	A8	P8	Basics 5+	Basics 4+	P8 trend
National Black Carribean Heritage	16670	39.1	-0.36	31.90%	52.40%	0.16
LA Black Caribean Heritage	83	33.1	-0.88	28.90%	45.80%	-0.15
LA Black Caribean Heritage not SEND	45	41.9	-0.52	37.80%	62.20%	0.36
LA all other ethnicities	1628	49.6	0.03	51.40%	67.80%	0.03
LA other Black Heritage	146	44.1	0.09	41.80%	65.10%	-0.02
LA White British	600	42.5	-0.45	42%	58.50%	-0.07
Blessed Hugh Farringdon BCH	7	12.5	-2.17	0%	14.30%	-1.58
JMA BCH	12	23	-1.28	8.30%	33.30%	-0.45
Kings Academy Prospect	22	30	-0.92	27.30%	40.90%	0.31
MER	6	43.6	-0.98	50%	66.70%	-0.75
Highdown	11	50.6	0.24	54.50%	63.60%	0.92
Reading Girls School	7	21	-1.71	14.30%	14.30%	-0.97
Reading School	2	81.3	0.24	100%	100%	-0.19
The Wren	8	48.3	0.22	38%	100%	1.49
UTC	6	35.2	-1.42	33.30%	33.30%	1.23

Table 24: Relationship between KS4 P8 outcomes, attendance, and cohort complexity by school. RAG shows cohort compared to National averages Darker colours indicate significant difference from average significant difference from average. **Data source: Ofsted IDSR DfE.**

School Name	national performance comparisson P8	FSM6 %	SEND K%	SEND EHCP %	EAL %	Stability	pupil base deprivation	location deprivation	Persistant absence %	Attainment on entry	% CIN	% CWSW Pupils
Kendrick	1 well above average	well below average	well below average	well below average	above average	well above average	well below average	average	below average	above average		0.1%
Reading School	1 well above average	well below average	well below average	well below average	above average	well above average	well below average	well below average	below average	above average		
Highdown	2 above average	well below average	below average	well below average	above average	average	well below average	well below average	average	average	0.5%	1.2%
Blessed Hugh Faringdon	3 average	below average	below average	well above average	well above average	average	above average	average	average	below average	0.6%	1.9%
Reading Girls' School	3 average	average	above average	below average	well above average	well below average	above average	well above average	average	average		
Wren	3 average	average	well below average	below average	well above average	well below average	average	average	average	below average	0.9%	2.3%
Maiden Erlegh Reading	3 average	average	well above average	average	well above average	below average	average	average	average	average	0.4%	2.6%
UTC Reading	4 below average	average	average	above average	above average	well above average	below average	average	well above average	below average	0.8%	0.8%
King's Academy Prospect	4 below average	above average	well above average	below average	well above average	well below average	above average	average	average	below average	1.3%	2.9%
JMA	5 well below average	well above average	below average	average	above average	well below average	above average	well above average	well above average	below average		

- Progress 8 is a measure that indicates how much a secondary school has helped pupils improve (or progress) over a five-year period when compared to a government-calculated expected level of improvement. It takes a pupil's performance in relation to their peers at primary school level, compares it with their performance at GCSEs (their Attainment 8 score) and establishes whether the individual has progressed at, above or below the expected level.

- Progress 8 scores are centred around zero (indicating expected progress) and nearly all mainstream schools nationally have a score in the range +/-1.0. In P8 terms, a score of +1.0 means that pupils achieve one grade higher in each subject than pupils with similar prior attainment nationally.

- Attainment 8 is a measure published annually showing the average academic performance of a secondary school. It is calculated by adding together pupils' highest scores across eight government approved school subjects.

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- The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is a performance measure for schools in England. It reflects students' achievements in a specific set of GCSE subjects that are considered essential for further study and future career opportunities. The EBacc includes the following subjects: English language and literature, Mathematics, Sciences (either combined science or three separate sciences: biology, chemistry, and physics), geography or history, a language (ancient or modern). Schools are evaluated based on the number of students taking these subjects and their performance in them. The goal is to ensure that students have a broad and balanced education that keeps their options open for the future

- The Basics 4+ and 5+ performance measure refers to the percentage of children gaining good passes at GCSE including English and Maths. GCSE passes in English and Maths are the standard entry requirement for most academic courses and Jobs post 16. Grade 4 is considered a "standard pass" and is roughly equivalent to the old grade C. Achieving a grade 4 means a student has met the basic requirements for the subject. Grade 5 is considered a "strong pass" and is roughly equivalent to a high C or low B in the old grading system.

Narrative analysis: standards in KS4

- Reading's Local Authority (LA) average performance remains strong, with most indicators placing it in quintile A. KS4 performance shows strengths in Attainment 8 scores, EBacc participation, and Maths progress. However, despite overall strong performance, comparative data indicates that Reading schools have experienced a decline in key performance metrics. This decline suggests that pupils are making less progress and achieving lower grades across their subjects compared to previous years. Areas for improvement include Progress 8 scores, English attainment, and progress in other subjects.

- There are significant gaps at KS4 for some pupil groups, particularly for Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEN support and EHCP.

- Average outcomes in Reading are skewed due to significant variations in school context and the relatively small number of schools. Some schools with weaker outcomes face contextual challenges that are significantly above national averages. Conversely, schools with the strongest performance tend to have contextual factors significantly below national averages and two are selective schools. The lowest performing school, JMA, was subject to DfE intervention in 2023-24 and was taken over by a new Trust in January 2025.

- The disadvantaged cohort of 384 pupils had an average Attainment 8 score of 31.2 in 2023-24, which is 18.8 points lower than the national non-disadvantaged cohort (50.0). The gap to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally improved slightly from -19.3 in 2022/23 to -18.8 in 2023/24. Disadvantaged pupils in Reading perform 3.4% lower than disadvantaged pupils nationally.

- The disadvantaged cohort had an average Progress 8 score of -0.83, which is 0.99 points lower than the national non-disadvantaged cohort and -0.27 points lower than the national disadvantaged average. The progress gap to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally grew from -0.91 in 2022/23 to -0.99 in 2023/24. 37.8% of the disadvantaged cohort achieved a grade of 4 or greater in English & Maths, which is 34.9% lower than the national non-disadvantaged cohort (72.7%) and 5.6% lower than disadvantaged pupils nationally. The gap

to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally reduced from -38.0% in 2022/23 to -34.9% in 2023/24.

- The SEN Support cohort of 246 pupils had an average Progress 8 score of -0.49, which is 0.46 points lower than the national all pupils' cohort (-0.03). The gap to all pupils nationally improved slightly in 2023/24. Pupils in Reading achieve -0.04 points below similar children nationally. The SEN Support cohort's English Progress score improved from -0.72 in 2022/23 to -0.58 in 2023/24. Children with SEN support needs are in the 64th percentile for English Progress score when compared to other LAs. The gap to all pupils nationally improved from -0.24 in 2022/23 to -0.18 in 2023/24, with the Maths Progress score for the group increasing by 0.05 points. SEN Support pupils are in the 30th percentile for Maths Progress score when compared to other LAs.

- 64 pupils with an EHCP plan had an average Progress 8 score of -1.64, which is 1.61 points lower than the national all pupils' cohort (-0.03). The gap to all pupils nationally increased from -1.19 in 2022/23 to -1.61 in 2023/24. Pupils with an EHCP plan are in the 97th percentile for Progress 8 score when compared to other LAs. 12.0% of pupils in this cohort achieved a grade of 4 or greater in EBacc: English, which is 62.5% lower than the national all pupils' cohort (74.5%) and 6.1% lower than children with an EHCP nationally. The gap to all pupils nationally improved slightly. In Maths, 13.3% of the EHCP cohort achieved a grade of 4 or greater, which is 56.7% lower than the national all pupils' cohort (70.0%) and 4% lower than the national average for this group.

- Children of Black Caribbean heritage in Reading show varied performance across different schools and metrics. While some schools demonstrate strong outcomes, others highlight areas needing improvement. Schools have overall engaged with the LA Anti-racist CPD offer.

- The average Attainment 8 score for Black Caribbean pupils nationally is 31.0. In Reading, the average score is slightly higher at 33.1, indicating that pupils in Reading are achieving better grades across their subjects compared to their peers nationally.

- Nationally, the Progress 8 score for Black Caribbean pupils is -0.36. In Reading, the score is slightly lower at -0.38, suggesting that pupils in Reading are making slightly less progress compared to their peers across the country.

- Children of Black Caribbean heritage with intersectional vulnerabilities are particularly at risk of underperformance. These children tend to underachieve disproportionately in schools where overall standards are lower. It is crucial for all school governors to track the performance of children in this group. Given that cohort numbers are typically very small, there is a risk that underperformance in this group may be attributed to individual factors rather than being recognized as an equity issue.

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9. Key Stage 5

Table 25: Reading KS5 overall performance against national quintile band performance Data Source: Reading Data Matrix

GCE/A Level/Level 3 Qualifications	Rank	2024	Rank	Latest Quartile Band A-D	Latest Available England Average
3+ A grades at GCE/Applied GCE A Level and Double Awards	1	30.1	2	A	14.5
% AAB or better at GCE A level, Applied GCE A level and Double A level	2	38.0	6	A	23.4
Av pt score per entry A Level Cohort	9	36.9	17	A	34.4
AAB or better A level, 2 facilitating subjects	1	35.3	2	A	17.1
Av pt score per entry - Tech Level	6	38.1	3	A	28.1
Av pt score per entry - General Studies	132	26.4	135	D	29.1
Av pt score per entry - Best 3 A Levels	7	37.4	19	A	35.1

Table 26: Attainment in Level 3 and L2 Maths and English in Reading compared to national and regional benchmarks between 2021- 2024. Data Source DFE

Area	Group	Total attained Level 3			%Attained Level 2 English & Maths by age 19			L2 M&E trend YOY
		2021/22	2022/23	**2023/24**	2021/22	2022/23	**2023/24**	
England	All pupils	60.06%	59.20%	**57.56%**	74.95	78.03	**75.76**	-2.27
South East	All pupils	61.33%	60.26%	**58.73%**	77.24	79.92	**77.87**	-2.05
Reading	All Pupils	62.04%	59.68%	**63.16%**	75.32	79.84	**76.14**	-3.70
England	Disadvantaged	41.77%	40.61%	**38.54%**	56.80%	60.26	**57.14**	-3.12
South East	Disadvantaged	35.32%	35.02%	**32.99%**	53.20%	57.34	**54.05**	-3.29
Reading	Disadvantaged	29.48%	31.13%	**37.85%**	50.75%	59.75	**55.39**	-4.36
England	Non disadvantaged	66.69%	65.78%	**64.41%**	81.53%	84.32	**82.47**	-1.85
South East	Non disadvantaged	67.62%	66.45%	**65.00%**	83.05%	85.46	**83.67**	-1.79
Reading	Non disadvantaged	71.75%	68.32%	**70.90%**	82.65%	85.92	**82.49**	-3.43
England	Education Health and Care plan	14.17%	14.33%	**14.15%**	20.55%	21.65	**21.04**	-0.61
South East	Education Health and Care plan	14.94%	16.25%	**15.20%**	23.33%	26.2	**23.33**	-2.87
Reading	Education Health and Care plan	20.31%	10.91%	**12.5%**	26.56%	30.91	**19.64**	-11.27
England	No identified SEN	65.04%	64.14%	**62.63%**	80.82%	84.08	**82.15**	-1.93
South East	No identified SEN	66.66%	65.52%	**64.20%**	83.19%	85.99	**84.44**	-1.55
Reading	No identified SEN	68.16%	64.74%	**69.84%**	81.22%	84.7	**83.57**	-1.13
England	SEN support	36.16%	36.52%	**35.08%**	46.87%	50.78	**47.47**	-3.31
South East	SEN support	35.61%	35.94%	**34.37%**	49.40%	52.97	**49.5**	-3.47
Reading	SEN support	34.96%	39.49%	**37.43%**	53.66%	61.15	**47.59**	-13.56

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Table 27: A Level performance by school and national benchmarks. Data Source DFE

School		Progress score	Average result	Average point score	Students completing their main study programme	Achieving AAB or higher,	Grade and points for a student's best 3 A levels	progress score benchmark comparisson
Reading School	187	0.26	GradeA	49.14	100.00%	70.60%	A 49.29	above average
King's Academy Prospect	36	-0.05	GradeD+	23.97	92.10%	0.00%	D+ 22.38	average
Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre	144	-0.03	GradeC+	32.25	97.20%	12.10%	C+ 32.7	average
UTC Reading	75	-0.12	GradeC-	26.71	94.90%	9.70%	C- 26.13	average
Kendrick School	143	-0.14	GradeB+	44.66	98.60%	52.40%	B+ 44.9	below averge
Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School	44	-0.29	GradeC	28.52	95.30%	5.90%	C 29.9	below averge
The WREN School	66	-0.31	GradeD+	21.83	89.90%	2.50%	D 21.17	below averge
John Madejski Academy	69	-0.75	GradeD	20.11	84.70%	1.90%	D 21.15	well below average
Reading	764	NA	B-	36.86	95.80%	35.30%	B- 37.38	
England - state-funded schools / colleges	262421	-0.03	C+	34.38	92.30%	17.10%	B- 35.08	

Narrative analysis: KS5

- There has been a decline in strong A Level performance over the last three years, but Reading remains in the top quartile (A) compared to the national benchmarks. As with KS4, area averages mask significant performance variation between schools with selective schools achieving progress and attainment outcomes well above national averages and others with outcomes well below national averages.

- Overall, the proportion of young people achieving AAB has decreased from 57.8% in 2020 to 38.0% in 2024, however, Reading still ranks in the top quartile (A) with the national average at 22.5%.

- Average point score per entry (A Level Cohort) dropped from 45.6 in 2020 to 36.9 in 2024, maintaining a top quartile (A) position, with the national average at 33.6. At the same time the Average point score per entry (Tech Level) improved significantly from 30.7 in 2020 to 38.1 in 2024, ranking in the top quartile (A) with the national average at 28.4.

- The Level 3 Gap between Disadvantaged and non-Disadvantaged children Increased from 30.7% in 2020 to 39.2% in 2024, placing in the bottom quartile (D) with the national average at 27.9%.

- Attainment by 19 at level three and level 2 including English and Maths in Reading is above the national average for all pupils. Standards declined nationally last year in both measures

- There are significant gaps by age 19 in disadvantaged children achieving level 2 and 3 qualifications. In 2023-24 Reading outcomes for this group at level 3 improved significantly and against a nationally declining trend. This has brought Reading outcomes for the group in line with national outcomes for the group. At level 2 however, outcomes are below national averages for the group and declined more than national trends. Level 2 qualifications in English and Maths remain a key factor in securing access to further education, apprenticeships and employment.

- Outcomes for children requiring SEN support at 19 continue to be in line with national averages for the group, however, outcomes at Level 2 significantly declined in Reading compared to national averages last year. Outcomes for children at 19 with an EHCP are significantly below national and show inconsistency over time. Though this may reflect

cohort characteristics, it also suggests that provision is not effective in supporting improved outcomes for this group year on year.

- In summary, while there are areas of improvement, such as the average point score per entry for Tech Levels and the reduction in the percentage of 16–17-year-olds whose current activity is not known, there are also areas that need attention, like access to high quality options for SEND pupils and reducing the gaps in access and performance of Disadvantaged students.

- Currently there is some school and college led networking for post 16 but this is at an early stage of development. Some links with business partnerships are also developing, however, there is a need to strengthen the scope and impact of this work on providing opportunities for disadvantaged young people and those with SEND.

10.　Children Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

Table 28: September 2023 NEET data. Data Source: DfE

Total NEET Group	NEET available for EET	NEET not yet ready for EET	Young Parents	Illness	Other reason	Not Known
51	38	13	>5	11	>5	589

Table 29: August 2024 NEET data. Data Source: DfE

Total NEET Group	NEET available for EET	NEET not yet ready for EET	Young Parents	Illness	Other reason	Not Known
120	86	34	>5	31	>5	0

Table 30: Summary of children NEET September 2023 - September 2024. Data source: NCCIS

Month	Reading NEET	NEET South East	NEET England	NEET Statistical Neighbours	Reading Not Known	Not Known South East	Not Known England	Not Known Statistical Neighbours
Sep 23	1.50%	1.70%	2.00%	2.10%	17.10%	37.00%	32.60%	36.00%
Oct 23	2.9%	2.0%	2.5%	2.3%	8.8%	21.2%	13.5%	20.7%
Nov 23	2.6%	2.3%	2.9%	2.7%	2.4%	9.6%	5.6%	6.8%
Dec 23	2.7%	2.6%	3.1%	3.0%	0.3%	5.3%	2.9%	1.8%
Jan 24	2.5%	2.9%	3.2%	3.1%	0.1%	3.9%	2.1%	1.2%
Feb 24	2.9%	3.1%	3.3%	3.3%	0.1%	2.7%	1.6%	1.1%
March 24	2.9%	3.2%	3.4%	3.3%	0.0%	2.8%	1.7%	0.9%
April 24	2.8%	3.2%	3.5%	3.5%	0.0%	2.7%	1.7%	1.4%
May 24	2.9%	3.1%	3.5%	3.5%	0.0%	2.9%	1.8%	1.3%
June 24	3.0%	3.1%	3.5%	3.5%	0%	3.2%	1.8%	1.4%
July 24	3.2%	3.2%	3.6%	3.6%	0%	3.2%	1.9%	**6.9%**
Sep 24	1.7%	1.8%	2.1%	2.2%	26.7%	31.2%	30.3%	27.0%

Narrative Analysis: NEET

- Reading has remained in the top quintile ranking for NEET since November 2023, having one of the lowest combined NEET and Not Known's numbers in England. We have had lower NEET and Not Known figures than our statistical neighbours all months between September 2023 and September 2024, apart from October 2023.

- In 2023/24 there was a gradual increase month by month in the NEET numbers. This is in line with the national and statistical neighbours' figures increase. At 2.6% NEET in August 2023 and 3.2% NEET in 2024. There has been an increase in the NEET numbers by 22%.

- The NEET group is broken up into categories as outlined in the September 2023 and August 2024 data tables. The NEET categories show the number of young people available to the labour market and actively seeking out EET opportunities and those young people who are NEET but are not yet available to access EET opportunities. There are various reasons which behind the "NEET not ready for EET" status, mainly due to barriers stopping them from progressing into EET such as their social, emotional and mental health support needs, young parents, those signed off due to ill health (physical or emotional), pregnancy or not available for EET for other reasons such as religious grounds.

- Between September 2023 and August 2024, the total number of 16- to 18-year-olds who left the NEET group into a positive outcome or have left the cohort was 107.Between September 2023 and August 2024, the total number of 16- 18-year-olds joining NEET was 190.

- The Elevate Team has delivered our ambition to have the least number of young people whose destination is unknown in the country. The 0% Not Known figure was achieved and recorded in March 2024 which stayed the same for the remainder of the academic year

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2023/2024. This has been achieved through having a robust data and tracking system in place, working effectively with educational establishments, training providers, and colleagues in Education and social care teams at BFfC. Having a highly effective tracking system in place we have been able to identify our NEET young people and give them the support to re-engage them back into positive destinations.

- June's 2024 ethnicity NEET data show an overrepresentation from Black Caribbean (9.3%), White and Black Caribbean (8.6%), other ethnic group-Arab (5.4%). The average NEET national figures for Black Caribbean are 3.6% and 4.8% in South East, White and Black Caribbean 5.9% England and 5.1% South East, other ethnic group- Arab 2.8% England and 6.6% South East.

- In June 2024 we had 230 young people with an open EHCP registered on the system, this equates to 6.2% of the total 16/17-year-old cohort (17 young people). Further analysis confirms an overrepresentation of SEND NEET with 7.4% registered as NEET compared to 3% of all NEET 16/17-year-olds.

- In June 2024 we had 402 young people identified with SEN Support needs (no EHCP) registered on the system; this equates to 10.8% of the total 16/17-year-old cohort. Further analysis confirms an overrepresentation of SEN support with 6.2% registered as NEET compared to 3% of all NEET 16/17-year-olds. Our NEET figure for this cohort is slightly below the 7.0% for the national average and average for South East at 6.3%.

- We are now reporting to the DfE on young people with mental health support needs. In the June data return we had 54 young people recorded with emotional and mental health needs. 70.4% of those were registered in EET (55.5% England, 53.4% South East) and 29.6% of the cohort were NEET (42.2% England, 46.6% South East). Young people with additional mental health support needs are overrepresented within the NEET group.

- In June 2024, 17 care leavers were registered on the system, 94.1% of those were EET (72.3% England, 71.7% South East). 39 children in care were registered on the system, 97.4% of whom were EET (76.7% England, 73.8% South East).

- In June 2024 50% of young parents (4 young people) were engaged in EET. In comparison the average EET for England is 21.0% and 19.3% for South East.

- We know that one of the biggest NEET indicating factors pre 16 is school absenteeism. This, in combination with school suspensions, and more learners being electively home educated, creates a demand on lower-level courses at further education colleges for students who don't meet their 5 GCSEs pass grades to continue education at level 3.

- Too few mainstream schools offer alternative pathways post 16 for level 2 and 3 courses for lower attaining children. Many vulnerable and disadvantaged children attend college. College providers therefore face the same impact in terms of cohort complexity as schools.

- Our largest local provider of post 16 courses is Reading College and Bracknell and Wokingham College, part of Activate Learning. Colleges created additional 400 spaces last

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year and 5 additional classrooms were opened at Reading College. 170 prospective learners were put on the waiting list in the first week in September.

- 150 young people applied for the Electrical Installation course, but only 40 places were available. The most popular courses are brickwork, plumbing, motor vehicle level 1(only 40 spaces available but there were 50 names on the waiting list beginning of September). There is a lack of suitable level 2 or below training or apprenticeships in several job sectors for example hairdressing, business admin, horticulture, construction, engineering, motor vehicle, hospitality and customer service which are in high demand for young people we support.

- GCSE and functional skills level 2 retakes are deterrent for some young people who become disengaged from education courses in both schools and colleges. Between September 2023 and August 2024, we recorded 40 NEET joiners from further education. In comparison 20 young people left employment and 5 left apprenticeships in the same period. In addition, the withdrawal of study programmes such as Prince's Trust Team programme that used to start at different point in academic year, and the removal of traineeships offers for retakes of maths and English for those that miss the September start, further drive NEET.

- Young people are leaving education early wishing to find work, but they need support to develop skills and access job opportunities. Many require additional and intensive support because of their complex and multiple barriers such as mental health needs, most notably anxiety. Access to specialist mental health support post 16 for all vulnerable young people in Reading is a barrier to education and training

- Demand for ESOL provision (students aged 16-18) are the largest cohort in Foundation. Young people from oversees are joining the NEET cohort at various points in academic year and are unable to start in education straight away.

11.   Exclusion and Suspension 2023/24

- National verified Data regarding suspension, exclusion and attendance in 2023-24 is not yet available.

- Reducing suspensions and exclusions remains a key local priority as it is key to safeguarding vulnerable adolescents in Reading and reducing educational inequality.

- Locally held data suggests there was an overall decrease in permanent exclusions in 2023/24 by 39% compared to the same period in the previous year. This is the best performance for permanent exclusions at this stage in over 10 years of records (since 2012/13, excluding Covid-19 periods). Out Borough Exclusions were Significantly lower than the previous year due to ongoing cross-border work with specific schools.

- Local data suggests that suspensions increased in all phases in 2023/24, however there was significant variation between schools with a few significant outliers in each phase impacting local averages.

- Children with SEND continue to be disproportionately suspended. There is correlation between the reduction in permanent exclusions and the increase in suspensions and use of Alternative Provision for SEND children across phases. These exclusions and suspensions

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suggest that some placements for SEND children are inappropriate. This is being addressed as art of the SEND strategy.

- Vulnerable children in Alternative Provision and part time placements present increased safeguarding risks.

- Children of world majority population backgrounds are more affected by exclusions and suspension.

- There is growing evidence this year of Increased consistency and confidence in schools supported by the Education Access and Inclusion, SEND RISE advisory, Virtual School, Educational Psychology and School Effectiveness services. Support and challenge have helped reduce exclusions and suspensions in this academic year for individual children and outlier schools. Greater integration and joint working between Children's Family Help and Safeguarding and Education Services will further support this targeted work.

12.   Attendance 2023/24

Table 31: Overall Absence in Reading compared to national benchmarks Academic Year 2023/24. Data Source: DFE

	Primary	Secondary	All
Reading Overall Absence	6.62%	8.49%	7.50%
South-East	5.57%	9.08%	7.33%
Statistical Neighbour	6.06%	9.09%	7.51%
England	5.90%	9.01%	7.37%
Reading Authorised	4.61%	5.28%	4.97%
South-East	4.37%	6.13%	5.24%
Statistical Neighbour	4.37%	5.63%	5.03%
England	4.25%	5.64%	4.95%
Reading Unauthorised	2.02%	3.21%	2.54%
South-East	1.40%	2.95%	2.10%
Statistical Neighbour	1.69%	3.46%	2.48%
England	1.65%	3.37%	2.42%

Table 32: The proportion of children persistently absent in Reading compared to benchmarks 2023-24. Data Source: DFE

2022-23	Primary	Secondary	**All**
Reading Persistent Absence	20.80% (-1.10% 21/22)	27.27% (-0.58% 21/22)	23.70%
South-East	15.24% (-1.75% 21/22)	26.49% (-0.97% 21/22)	20.67%
Statistical Neighbour	17.6% (-0.61% 21/22)	26.74% (-0.97% 21/22)	21.86%
England	16.21% (-1.49% 21/22)	26.52% (1.19% 21/22)	21.22%

Table 33: The absence of children in our care in Reading compared to benchmarks in 2023-24. Data Source: DFE

Reading children in our care Absence	6.2%
South-East	8.6%

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Statistical Neighbours	9.7%
England	8.3%

Table 34: The % of sessions missed of Children in Need and children with a Child Protection Plan in Reading compared to benchmarks in 2023-24. Data Source: DFE

%age of sessions missed for Children In Need	2022/23	Change from previous year
Reading	17.1	3.6
South East	17.8	1.2
Statistical Neighbours	18.22	1.95
England	17.6	1.3
%age of sessions missed for children with a Child Protection Plan	2022/23	Change from previous year
Reading	25.6	3.7
South East	22.4	2.9
Statistical Neighbours	23.37	3.99
England	21.7	2.3

Narrative analysis regarding attendance

- Poor attendance in Early Years impacts school readiness and has repercussions throughout a child's education. Children that don't attend well in early years settings often have poor attendance in reception and year one.

- In all phases children that are persistently absent achieve significantly weaker outcomes than their peers that attend school well.

- Outcomes in overall attendance and authorised absence in Secondary Schools were better in Reading than South-East, Statistical neighbours and national averages

- Primary school attendance continues to be weaker than national averages and benchmarks and remains an area of focus, however, persistent absence is reducing in Reading, in 22/23 this was nearly double the rate of statistical neighbours.

- There is continued strong performance for Children Looked After in Reading compared to benchmarks, reflecting the support of the Virtual School, Social Care teams and Schools and settings for this group.

- Children on Children In Need plans had higher attendance in Reading in 2022/23 when compared with South East, Statistical Neighbours and National. However, there has been a sharp rise from the previous year

- Children with a Child Protection Plan had lower attendance in Reading in 2022/23 when compared with South East, Statistical Neighbours and National benchmarks

13.   Ofsted inspections of Reading schools

- As of January 2025, Schools are not issued a single overall judgement grade following inspection. They will be issued with separate judgements for leadership and management, quality of education, Personal development, Behaviour and attendance, EYFS and Sixth form provision.

- The current Ofsted framework is being revised, and a new reporting system will replace the existing system in September 2025. Support for schools regarding the new framework will be provided by the School Effectiveness team as soon as possible, following Ofsted team training in October 2025. School inspections will not take place between September and October 2025 in preparation for the new framework.

- The DfE are also consulting on changes to school accountability ad intervention in schools causing concern. National RISE teams have been established and have begun work with priority schools across England. There are no Reading schools subject to RISE intervention at this time.

- Analysis of Ofsted inspection reports of Reading schools for the last 18 months, mirrors findings from School Effectiveness visits. Reports identify the following common strengths in Reading schools:

✓ schools have well-structured and ambitious curricula that build progressively from early years through to Sixth form.

✓ There is a strong emphasis on reading, with high quality systematic phonics teaching and engaging reading activities.

✓ Effective support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), ensuring they can access the full curriculum.

✓ Skilled teachers with strong subject knowledge, particularly in core subjects like mathematics and English.

✓ Good assessment ensuring regular checks on pupils' learning to inform future lessons and address knowledge gaps.

✓ Primary Schools excel in personal development, offering strong pastoral care and a values-based PSHE curriculum.

✓ Children benefit from effective extracurricular activities, including clubs, trips, and enrichment activities that help pupils develop wider interests and skills.

✓ Schools place emphasis on inclusivity and celebrating cultural diversity.

✓ Schools are vision and values led with high expectations communicated from leaders at all levels, including governors, trustees and executive officers.

- ✓ There is strong focus on staff well-being and professional development, contributing to positive team ethos and working environments.

- ✓ Effective behaviour management strategies are evident, creating calm and orderly environments. Strong safeguarding cultures and practices protect children and focus on pupils' well-being.

- • Analysis of reports show the following common areas for development:

- ✓ Some foundation subjects require further refinement to ensure that curriculum design and implementation is fully effective across all areas.

- ✓ Variability in the delivery of the curriculum, particularly in foundation subjects, can lead to inconsistent implementation and learning outcomes.

- ✓ There is a need for more consistent and effective assessment strategies across all subjects to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge and leaders need to ensure that assessment tasks contribute effectively to pupils' learning in all subjects.

- ✓ Some staff in some schools need further training to deliver the curriculum confidently, particularly in specific areas like literacy and mathematics. Not all staff have the necessary subject knowledge and pedagogical skills to support pupils' learning effectively.

- ✓ Some schools need to refine the adaptation of the curriculum for pupils with SEND to ensure they receive the most effective support.

- ✓ Secondary schools need to strengthen the provision for pupils with more complex SEND to ensure consistent learning outcomes.

- ✓ Engaging families and external partners to improve attendance rates and address persistent absenteeism so that all pupils benefit from regular attendance and full participation in school activities.

- ✓ Ensuring governors and trustees have a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the school's work to hold leaders effectively accountable and strengthen oversight of the school's wider curriculum and improvement plans.

- • Parent view responses to Ofsted inspection parent survey questionnaires indicate good levels of parental satisfaction with Reading schools. 90% of parents would recommend their child's school and feel that their child is happy at school. This indicates a positive overall experience. Schools are effective in making parents aware of what their child will learn during the year and parents believe that schools have high expectations

- • parents strongly agree that schools are safe places for their children and that leaders ensure pupils are well-behaved, reflecting effective behaviour management strategies.

- • 81% of parents with SEND children agree that the school provides the necessary support for their child to succeed suggesting that this is still an area for schools to build parental

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confidence. Feedback from Parent Carer networks mirrors this analysis, particularly in relation to transition from Nursery to Reception and between year six and seven.

- While many parents are satisfied with the school's handling of bullying there is room for improvement to ensure even higher levels of satisfaction.

- Parents feedback about complaint handling is the weakest area in responses. Parents views reflect that consistent and clear communication would further enhance parental engagement and satisfaction. Guidance has been provided to schools about parental behaviour and managing complaints. Training is available from the school effectiveness team on using restorative approaches to managing complaints.

14.   School Effectiveness activity 2023-2024

- School Governing Boards, Trustees and their Executive Leaders are accountable for the standards and achievement in their schools as outlined by the Department for Education.

- The roles and responsibilities of BFfC on behalf of the Local Authority are to:

✓ Act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who: are looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences institutional and societal discrimination, have a social worker, are a survivor of trauma and or have physical or mental health needs.

✓ Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress.

✓ Be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.

✓ Identify schools causing concern and to rapidly intervene where a school is at risk of decline or failing standards, working closely with the DfE regional director, diocese, and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve.

✓ Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to: take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools; enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.

✓ Exercise relevant powers to intervene in locally maintained schools causing concern (Schools Causing Concern 2022) and to work with the regional director where there are concerns about school effectiveness in academy schools and settings.

- The Strategic Framework for School Effectiveness sets out how BFfC discharges its duties, primarily through the School Effectiveness service. Work to influence the local system is based on long-term projects that support schools to effectively implement research-based approaches in their schools; to ensure that every school has in place strategies that will

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make the most difference according to research in improving equity, inclusion, and outcomes for the bottom 20% of attainers.

- The framework recognises that school leaders have the expertise and experience to support school improvement, and that collaborative school-led partnerships are a key feature of local education provision with improvement being driven by local schools. Where the Local Authority needs to intervene in schools to bring about rapid improvement it commissions and brokers school-to-school support wherever this is possible

- Targeted support and school effectiveness projects are provided to support improvement in outcomes identified by data and through School Effectiveness activities across the academic year. The service made over 250 visits to schools in 2023-24, undertook moderation of KS2 monitoring activities and provided training across the year for school staff.

- Collaboration is ongoing between BFfC, schools, Mobius Maths Hub and the BFfC English Advisory Team in supporting school improvement in phonics, reading, maths and writing.

- The team have worked with a national lead provider (WalkThrus) to support schools to embed instructional coaching in all LA maintained and participating schools. This has involved a place based funded project working with the national WalkThrus team in all South Reading primary schools and a local project providing school-to-school support between 11 schools. Project impact will be evaluated in august 2025. Early evidence suggests strong impact, where leaders have implemented the approach rigorously and as a central part of their school development and CPD plan.

- The School Effectiveness team collaborate with both RISE and the EPS to ensure consistent approaches are implemented in schools and that advisory work is consistent, quality assured and focused on the key priorities for school improvement.

- School to school, and agency support has been brokered for schools causing concern to secure improvements identified by School leaders and School Effectiveness leads. This has been successful in achieving progress and in securing positive judgements in Ofsted inspections.

- The team also completed headteacher performance management for 30 schools and provided training for headteachers, subject leads, individual school staff teams, behaviour leads, safeguarding leads, school business managers and governors. Safeguarding audits take place in all Locally maintained schools annually.

- The School Effectiveness team have coordinated the work of school based Anti-Racist lead practitioners, AET trainers and move more active participation practitioners, who have led training and networks across most Reading schools. They have delivered Racial literacy programmes, Good Autism Practice training and Active participation networks. These have been well attended and evaluated positively by schools and settings. These projects have driven school-to-school partnerships and secured effective networking. Staff in schools have a good understanding of these areas and increasingly, school effectiveness officers identify evidence of training implementation at classroom level. There is no further funding to

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support school practitioner led work in 2025-26, though training will continue to be provided/ traded through RISE, EPS and the School Effectiveness team.

15.   Education Partnership Board Strategic Objectives 2024-2027

In response to analysis of educational outcomes in 2022-23, the following strategic priorities were agreed for 2024-2027, following co-production with schools and settings.

Priority 1: Developing a Sustainable Self-Improving Education System

BFFC Strategy Commitments:

- **Five-year school place plan:** Setting out school organization for sustainability, reviewed annually with schools.

- **Education team offers/system projects:** Supporting schools/settings to embed evidence-informed curriculum design and instructional coaching approaches.

- **EPB "Governor Hub" platform:** Developing and maintaining a shared area for school leaders to centralize system events, share documents, training, and best practice resources.

School Cluster Strategy Commitments:

- **Cluster Engagement:** Enhancing member participation and aligning important dates with the Education Partnership Board for better strategic alignment and accountability.

- **Data Sharing:** Sharing cluster data, School Development Plans (SDP), and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in September meetings to identify strengths and weaknesses.

- **Research-Informed Approaches:** Implementing research-informed approaches in collaboration projects, coordinated cluster meetings, staff meetings, inset days, and shared training.

- **Leadership Strengthening:** Engaging in cross-school moderation, quality assurance, and promoting expertise sharing through cluster networks.

- **System Leader Capacity:** Identifying and communicating system leader capacity to support school-to-school led improvement.

Priority 2: Reducing Educational Inequality

BFFC Strategy Commitments:

- **SEND Strategy 2022-2027:** Delivering priorities including advisory support, mainstream investment, and creating additional special school capacity.

- Cultural and Business Education Partnership: Focusing on reducing inequality.

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- **PWC Pathways:** Reviewing and scaling up pathways to paid internships.

- **Persistent Absence Pathway:** Developing a pathway with partners to support persistently absent children.

- **Family Hub Offer:** Including accessible support for parents with children who have attendance barriers.

- **Fixed Penalty Notices:** Implementing the national framework.

- **Risk Assessment Systems:** Supporting risk assessment and prevention for children at risk of suspension or not in receipt of full-time education.

- **Racial Literacy Training:** Providing training for schools.

- **Alternative Provision:** Developing and implementing a tiered approach including school-based, alternative curriculum pathways, and provisions.

- **ARP Networks:** Developing networks and peer review.

- **SENDCO Networks:** Facilitating networks.

- **EYFS Strategy:** Delivering strategy to reduce gaps on entry to school and increase school readiness.

School Cluster Strategy Commitments:

- **Data Analysis:** Analysing data for specific student groups to identify barriers and collective actions.

- **Diversity Training:** Ensuring diversity training for all staff and using inclusion expertise to support other schools.

- **Joint CPD:** Sharing knowledge and training about inclusion.

- Behaviour and EAL Networks: Establishing networks.

- **Work Experience:** Offering Year 10 work experience in cluster schools for disadvantaged children.

Priority 3: Supporting Schools and Settings with Significant Cohort Complexity

BFFC Strategy Commitments:

- **Place-Based Projects:** Planning and implementing projects.

- **Family Hubs:** Developing locality-based hubs.

- **Targeted Support:** Providing targeted support and time allocation from the education team.

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- **Pilot Investment:** Investing in and scaling up place-based pilots.

- **Risk Assessment:** Implementing tiered risk assessment to mitigate contextual and external risks.

School Cluster Strategy Commitments:

- **Transition Arrangements:** Facilitating consistent and transparent transition arrangements between schools and settings.

- **Onboarding Arrangements:** Streamlining onboarding for families in high turnover/mobility schools.

- **Parental Engagement:** Optimizing engagement and attendance through cluster communications/events.

- **SEND Experience Development:** Developing opportunities for staff in less complex schools to gain SEND experience and inclusion knowledge.

- **Highlighting Success:** Using collective resources to highlight successful practices in complex schools.

- **Admissions Data Sharing:** Sharing data to improve transparency and inform hard-to-place protocols.

Priority 4: Supporting Education Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Wellbeing

BFFC Strategy Commitments:

- **Headteacher Induction:** Reviewing induction and development.

- **Keyworker Housing:** Developing housing options for staff in priority schools.

- **School Business Managers SLA:** Developing the service level agreement.

- **Wellbeing Survey:** Implementing annual wellbeing survey, risk assessment, and mitigations.

- **Wellbeing Support:** Expanding the wellbeing offer to school staff, including a register of locally available executive support.

- **Recruitment and Retention Strategy:** Developing RBC strategy and resourcing, including remuneration, benefits, housing, training, and transport.

- **Teacher Training Partnerships:** Forming partnerships with domestic and overseas providers.

- **Local Adult Education Offer:** Enhancing the offer to support EYFS and school recruitment.

School Cluster Strategy Commitments:

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- **International Recruitment:** Developing international recruitment and local education careers pathway.

- **Mentoring and Peer Support:** Establishing cluster-level mentoring, coaching, and peer support options.

- **Wellbeing Package:** Creating a cluster-level wellbeing package for staff.

- **Succession Planning:** Planning DHT succession and networking.

- **Wellbeing Events:** Organising annual HT conference and frequent wellbeing events.

16.   Progress against Education Partnership Board Strategic Objectives

- Evidence from School Effectiveness work in weaker performing schools at the end of 22-23 suggested that more school improvement capacity was needed, to support the implementation of improved curriculum approaches, so that more children meet the expected standard.

- The education Partnership Board was established in 2023 to support the development of school led improvement collaboration and tackle educational inequality.

- Area wide education Board Strategic Priorities were co-produced and developed in 2022-23, with school and setting partners, to identify and address local performance issues and develop school-to-school support.

- The Education Partnership Board is now firmly established, and this year has seen a significant increase in cluster led activity and school improvement initiatives including those supported through the Council's place-based projects in South Reading.

- Cohort complexity continues to impact the workload and school improvement focus of senior leaders in some schools. This means the improvement trajectory in these schools can take time. Extra capacity in terms of school improvement and school-to-school support is often needed, but difficult to finance and source. To date, focused cluster led school improvement support in these schools has been limited due to resourcing.

- More strategic systems work is needed to support community initiatives to address barriers to achievement and school improvement such as poor attendance. Some projects have begun and will need long-term political support and financial investment to have impact.

- Leaders in schools with the weakest performance continue to raise the need for multi-agency input to help them manage significant safeguarding, socio-economic, SEND, and attendance barriers. In some schools the caseload for headteachers, Designated leads and SENCOs is significant and impacts the time and resources available to focus on their core role of school improvement.

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- Recruitment and retention of governors in locally maintained schools continues to be a priority. Recruiting and developing governors with the time, commitment and skill level needed to support schools with complex contexts can be a significant barrier to sustainable improvement.

Table 35: Evaluation to date of Education Partnership Board Strategic Objectives for 2024-2027

Target	RAG Rating	Comments
Priority 1		
School place planning options agreed to inform and ensure sufficiency	On track	Additionally Resourced Provision expansion has led to increased sufficiency of school places for children with SEND. Special school provision expansion agreed by ACE Committee January 2025. School Place planning strategy actions on track
Increasing numbers of Reading schools represented at Cluster meetings	On track	Cluster representation improving year on year
100% LA maintained schools represented at Governor Directors briefings	On track	All LA maintained schools attended Director's briefings in 2023-24 – strong attendance to date in this academic year
Governor Hub schools site established and maintained	Achieved	Governor Hub site established and maintained; good access and engagement from governors
Cluster level data analysis available to Cluster leads to inform school to school support	On track	Data made available to Cluster leads and being used to inform school to school collaboration
Targeted support leads to Good level of development above National average	On track	Improvement quintile A n 2023-24
Targeted support leads to Phonics YR 1 meeting standard above national average	On track	Above national average in 2023-24 and in improvement quintile A
Targeted support leads to KS2 RWM at or above national average	On track	Below national average in 2023-24 but in improvement quintile A
Targeted support leads to the proportion of primary schools with outcomes at KS2 below national averages is reduced		19 schools were below average in 2022-3. This rose by one to 20 schools below average in 2023-4- some schools in this group made significant improvements. A continued area of focus.

Target	RAG Rating	Comments
Outcomes at KS4 improve beyond the rate of national improvement in schools that were below national averages in P8 and A8 in 2023-24		Overall school improvement at KS4 is in quintile D. 2/5 schools that were below national averages for A8 In 2022/3 improved outcomes in 2023/4
Priority 2		
Implementation and delivery of Behaviour support services	On track	RISE Regulation support available from October 2024 and engaging in all priority schools and impacting on exclusion rates
Delivery of SEND Strategy 2022-2027	On track	Enhanced strategic leadership is supporting delivery of priorities including advisory support, mainstream investment, and creating additional school capacity.
Racial literacy and anti-racist training informing school approaches to reducing inequality	On track	Increasing number of schools undertaking anti-racist training. Reading University conference to review progress Summer 2025.
In 2024-25 Outcomes for Disadvantaged in all key stages are above national averages for the group and/or have improved at a rate beyond national improvement rates	EYFS on track	Just above national for the group in 23-24
	Phonics on track	Just above national for the group in 23-24
	KS2 on track	Below group but improved by 4.2% compared to national 1.5% improvement
	KS4	Below group. No improvement
Priority 3		
In 2024-25 Place-based projects and targeted support enable improvement in outcomes from 2023-24 in involved schools	On track	5/6 schools made improvements above the national rate of improvement in RWM. National improvement rate 1.1%, Average project improvement rate 9.4%
Priority 4		
Headteacher induction programme implemented from September 2024	On track	Plan created and implemented for new HTs
Register of local coaching support available on Governor Hub by December 2024	On track	All Locally maintained heads have entitlement and access to executive support. Just under 50% have taken up the offer

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Target	RAG Rating	Comments
Year on Year improvement in Headteacher wellbeing survey		Some marginal improvements in some areas of survey. Increase in uptake of Executive coaching offer

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Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee	Reading Borough Council — Working better with you

02 July 2025

Title	SEND Strategy 2022-2027 Annual Update
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Brian Grady, Director of Education
Lead Councillor	Councillor Wendy Griffith, Lead Councillor for Children and Councillor Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	1. That ACE Committee notes the progress on delivering the partnership SEND Strategy for Reading 2022-2027 2. That ACE Committee notes the key strengths, challenges and priorities set out in the partnership Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) 3. That ACE Committee endorses next steps to continue to deliver the 2022-2027 strategy.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. This report provides an update regarding the delivery of the Reading partnership Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2022-2027.

1.2. This report summarises the further progress made on the ambitions and actions set out in the strategy. The over-riding key performance indicator for the strategy is that the future local area inspection in Reading, in the complex national context, identifies the effectiveness of all partners to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

1.3. The strategy 'went live' from January 2022 and work strands have driven priority actions, reporting to the SEND strategy group.

1.4. On 17th October 24 a strengthened Reading SEND Strategy Board was launched, with strengthened senior leadership. The revised SEND Strategy Board is co-chaired by The Executive Director of Children's Services, Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children, and the Director of Vulnerable People, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West NHS Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB).

1.5. Significant progress has been made to review the impact and effectiveness of the SEND strategy and examples of the partnership's impact on outcomes for children are included here. In addition, detailed work on the self-evaluation framework (SEF) of the SEND partnership system in Reading has been completed, responding in the first instance to the lived experience of our children and families, and is attached to this report for reference (Appendix 1).

2. Policy Context

2.1. The Council Plan 2025-28 has established five priorities. These are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

2.2. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website. These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective, and economical.

2.3. The Reading partnership SEND Strategy 2022-2027 contributes directly to the Council's priorities to Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children, promote more equal communities in Reading and to secure Reading's economic and cultural success. The Council Plan sets out our objective to improve our local special educational needs and disabilities offer and support education settings to develop inclusive practice, so children receive high quality education locally, and achieve their potential.

2.4. As reported to Health and Wellbeing Board in November 2024, the Reading partnership SEND Strategy 2022-2027 sets out how the local area partnership will deliver support and services in collaboration with children, young people, families and carers to meet local needs and national responsibilities.

2.5. Our strategy for children and young people with SEND is rooted in our vision for Reading's children and young people:

All children and young people with SEND will be supported through the provision of the right support at the right time to be as independent as possible and have their emotional, social and physical health needs met. They will have choice and agency in adult life and be able to access and navigate services to lead rich and fulfilling lives and flourish in a healthy, thriving and inclusive borough.

2.6. Our strategy is aligned to the aims and objectives of the 2023 HM Government SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, to deliver 'The right support, in the right place, at the right time.' It reflects the positive outcome of the June 2021 local area inspection and the key areas for development identified through that report. Our strategy is co-produced with local parent carers and children, is informed by related key national documents such as the SEND Code of Practice (2015), National Autism Strategy (2021), the National Disability Strategy (2021) and the NHS Long Term Plan. It also takes account of national advocacy campaigns that promote the rights of disabled people. Our strategy will continue to be informed by any consultation results announced by HM Government.

2.7. Reading partnership have completed an area SEND Self Evaluation Framework (SEF), following strategic analysis of the Reading partnership system's strengths, strategic risks and gaps. The SEND SEF provides the narrative around the SEND system and the particular strengths in the Reading system for children with SEND, including the commitment to coproduction with families and the strength of the Therapeutic Thinking approach to working with schools. The SEND SEF is attached to this report at Appendix 1 and provides a more detailed update to the Committee.

3. Progress on the SEND Strategy 2022-2027

3.1. The SEND Strategy 2022-2027 has been delivered through the following work strands:

- Strand 1: Communications

- Strand 2: Early intervention through to specialist support

- Strand 3: Emotional wellbeing

- Strand 4: Preparing for adulthood

- Strand 5: Short breaks

- Strand 6: Local Area Inspection

Each work strand has been overseen by a steering group, with representation from Reading Borough Council, Brighter Futures for Children, NHS, and parents and carers. Progress in 2024 on each strand is set out below, with next steps for 2025 identified.

3.2. In summer 2024 a thorough review of Reading SEND systems sufficiency for children and young people was undertaken. This started with listening with care to the lived experiences of children and families; and informed a first Strategic Risk & Risk Mitigation partnership framework being developed and embedded in BFfC/RBC and BOB Integrated Care Board (ICB) governance structures.

3.3. In response to the updated SEND Strategic Risk Assessment for Reading and the Self Evaluation (SEF) the focus of each workstream has been strategically refocussed from October 2024, in specific and measurable strategic workplans, to make best use of partnership resource.

3.4. **Strand 1: Communications**

3.5. Work strand 1 has been highly effective and productive.

3.6. Reading Family Information Service and SEND Local Offer have continued to effectively support families with information advice and support and are seen as trusted and impartial by parent carers. The Family Information Service have received recognition for their impact and quality as Winners of the National Association of Family Information Services (NAFIS) Coram Family & Childcare award for Best Community Engagement 2022 and 'Best SEND Local Offer' 2022.

3.7. Considerable attention has been given to co-designing and updating SEND resources for Reading families and for the wider partnership support system. This has included significant time and energy invested in:

- Preparation for Adulthood resources

- Updated Ordinarily Available Provision and Graduated Response advice and guidance

3.8. These resources have been actively contributed to by SEND families, supported by Reading Families' Forum and wider community groups, and by the wider partnership spanning BFfC, education, health and voluntary sector partners.

3.9. Special United/Me2Club, our children and young people's participation group for children with SEND, BOB ICB and Brighter Futures for Children have worked together to build upon the videos to help boost understanding of children & young people with autism and/or additional needs; their lived experience has informed the Ordinarily Available and Graduated revised guidance to early years settings, schools and the wider system.

3.10. Reading Information Advice and Support Service have continued to provide videos and webinars for children and young people and parents and carers on what the service is and how it can help; an introduction to SEND support and an introduction to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

3.11. In response to direct requests from parents and caregivers, a condensed summary of the SEND system (SEND Roadmap) has been developed in close partnership with Reading Families Forum and wider community groups.

3.12. In partnership with the health economy, new simplified guides to accessing speech and language therapy support have been produced and published.

3.13. Impact of our communications and engagement continues to be tested out through parent carer and young people surveys, which are providing positive feedback. Close attention has

been paid to the lived experience of families and young people, including the design of a new SEND quality assurance thematic learning programme, which embeds cultural humility into learning.

3.14. **Communications: next steps**

3.15. The new strategic workplan for the communications workstream focuses on the promotion of the many newly produced resources and guidance for SEND families and for the local system of professionals.

3.16. Following communications support to capture Reading partnership's positive impact on outcomes for children and young people with SEND, promotion of the achievements and learning of the partnership is underway.

3.17. Improved information and communications with parents and carers while awaiting an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessment remains a priority.

3.18. Ongoing communication with parent carers about new SEND school places in Reading will remain a priority, as more provision becomes available.

3.19. We will continue to communicate new developments, including the delivery of the new Reading Inclusion Support in Education service to families through Local Offer newsletters, social media and the Local Offer homepage.

3.20. **Strand 2: Early intervention through to specialist support**

3.21. Following Reading Borough Council having been successful in securing a £1M grant as part of the Department of Education's (DfE's) 'Delivering Better Value' (DBV) programme, significant investment was made in establishing the RISE programme to provide support and advice to educational settings, to develop the most inclusive practice for children with SEND. The impact of this work on outcomes for children is currently being reviewed.

3.22. Significant work has been undertaken to improve the quality of information and support to partners and to families, on clear expectations for Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) and Graduated Response guidance. These significant improvements to local guidance were approved by the SEND Strategy Board in October 2024.

3.23. A whole system review of the SEND system from early intervention through to specialist support has been undertaken to inform a whole system Reading SEND strategic risk assessment; identification of impact on outcomes for children; gaps analysis and detailed Self Evaluation (SEF). This has led to a redesign of SEND Strategic governance and all workstreams.

3.24. Early Years Early Intervention Fund rollout commenced on schedule in April 2024. Initial uptake has been strong, and a number of Education, Health and Care Need Assessments for children in early years have been diverted towards early intervention, thereby evidencing impact on improving Ordinarily Available Provision.

3.25. The changes to the Speech and Language system have improved timely access to speech and language support in the early years, i.e. there are currently no children on the waiting list for support in the early years, which is a crucial systems improvement for early intervention.

3.26. Capacity in the Early Years Portage team has increased following recruitment and change of model resulting in 92 families now able to receive home visits and 20 families can be invited to group.

3.27. As part of the delivery of their children and young people's strategy, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust has responded to identified areas for improvement in relation to

completion of Education Health and Care (EHC) assessments and simplifying the referral pathways for therapies for children. The Trust have instigated a more streamlined process allowing professionals to complete EHC assessments in a timelier fashion which has led to an improvement in compliance.

3.28. **Early intervention through to specialist support: next steps**

3.29. Following the implementation of the DfE Delivering Better Value Programme, and in particular the introduction of the new Reading Inclusion Support in Education service, the impact of the RISE offer is being reviewed.

3.30. Many parents and carers continue to be concerned about the amount of time they have to wait for a diagnosis appointment for ADHD and ASD. The team have continued to work very hard including holding weekend clinics so that we can offer more appointments to families. Work is also being undertaken by the Neuro Diversity team with Healios and Psychiatry-UK to reduce the waiting lists for Autism and ADHD. Reading Families Forum and wider community groups report an experience of waiting times that requires further consideration. ICB leaders are actively reviewing how the whole system might move from a traditional medical model to an early intervention, needs-led system. Timescales and proposals on the approach to this necessary development for the system are welcomed and awaited.

3.31. Some families still experience services and pathways across the partnership of providers which don't work together seamlessly. Some pathways to health services are not clear enough and can be confusing.

3.32. Data sharing from across the health system remains challenging. Data sharing is one of the top 3 priorities for the BOB ICB. Work has been undertaken to provide local (i.e., Reading-specific) data, a data dashboard is required.

3.33. Progressing plans for increasing the sufficiency of local provision through the SEND Commissioning Strategy and the School Place Planning strategy is a key priority. Whilst significant success has been achieved in delivering additional places for children for academic year 2024/2025, as previously reported to ACE Committee, more places will be needed for forthcoming academic years onwards and a programme of significant development for specialist educational provision to meet demand has commenced.

3.34. Also as previously reported to ACE Committee, working with schools to focus on reducing suspensions and exclusions of SEN children is a key priority for the Reading area SEND partnership and the Reading Education Partnership. Work is being undertaken to embed the range of training, resources and support to schools so as to increase inclusion of Reading's children and young people and reduce exclusions of SEN children in mainstream education (recognising that vulnerability to extrafamilial harm, exploitation and other forms of harm, increases significantly for our children when they are excluded from school).

3.35. Intentional work with early years and education providers is underway to increase cultural curiosity, humility and sensitivity to marginalisation and minoritisation, and how lived experience of prejudice and discrimination impacts on proactive inclusion practice, and specifically the importance of understanding and proactively responding to intersectionality for SEND children.

3.36. There continues to be a need to increase special educational provision from early years to KS4. Proactive Commissioning Strategic intention and co-design with the system, spanning Workstream 2 and Workstream 4, will progress the range of provision available in the coming years. Proposals for expanded and new local special school provision is being considered by Reading Borough Council.

3.37. SEND early identification opportunities are informing the design and development of family support, including the development of Reading's Family Hubs; and are informing preventative Youth Justice support.

3.38. Educational attainment for SEND children starts off strongly in early years, but deteriorates by the time children reach Key Stage 4. Improving outcomes at later Key Stages is a key strategic priority for the Reading Education Partnership and the Reading area SEND partnership.

Strand 3: Emotional wellbeing

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3.39. Significant progress has been made with emotional health and wellbeing. As noted in the previous report, The work of the emotional wellbeing group is of significant importance for the SEND Strategy. The co-design of Emotional Health (EMH) Triage has progressed significantly and final draft design stage has been reached and approved by Brighter Futures for Children Senior Leadership Team and Reading's DPIA Board.

3.40. EMH Triage has been modelled on national best practice and relies on a set of detailed arrangements. Reading's co-design of EMH Triage bring relevant EMH partners together to respond to these children's needs more effectively and be clear which service is best placed to provide help and support to the child/family. This builds on the strengths of the front door One Reading Partnership (ORP) arrangements [Please see EMH Visualisation].

3.41. The aims of Reading's EMH Triage are:

- To give children and young people with mild to moderate emotional health needs (who don't yet need CAMHS or more intensive support) a single point of contact for help.

- To make sure children get the right help at the right time, reducing the need for multiple referrals and waiting for different services.

- To provide early, preventative support, helping children feel better and keep improving their emotional health.

- To quickly connect children who need more help to more specialist emotional health support.

- To make sure that if there are any concerns about a child's safety, these are dealt with quickly.

- To track the impact of the support given on outcomes for children and make improvements where needed.

3.42. The Information Sharing arrangements (ISA) set out for EMH Triage are founded on the ISA agreement in the BWSCP (Berkshire West Safeguarding Child Partnership) arrangements will provide the wider system for governance. Specific detailed escalation arrangements have been designed for EMH Triage in the event of safeguarding concerns being identified for a child and we have agreed a CSPOA ATM will attend EMH Triage to support this function. Clinical escalations will be managed through to BHFT, and this has been agreed with the CPE Team, BHFT senior managers and BOB ICB.

3.43. EMH Triage will start with a soft launch anticipated in July 2025, managing the existing referrals for children with emotional health needs we receive routinely to better coordinate the system and test the efficacy of the arrangements. Partnership and self-referrals will commence from September 2025, all being well and a specific referral form has been developed for this purpose.

3.44. The feedback from schools has been overwhelmingly positive and significant support has been offered from schools to the design, this platform for co-design also provided an important opportunity for relationship building with leads in Family Help and CSPOA.

3.45. It is essential that each child is robustly monitored and reviewed and a routine tracking of each child on a 12 weekly basis is proposed, to ensure the journey of our children is understood and improved impact on outcomes is achieved.

3.46.   'Therapeutic Thinking Schools' networks and training are strategically crucial to Reading's preventative approach to inclusion of all children in Reading schools. Therapeutic Thinking continues to be supported in the vast majority of Reading schools, with positive impact on inclusion and support for Reading children. Educational Psychologists and the Primary Mental Health Teams are offering mental health surgeries to all Reading schools and this is well received.

3.47.   The impact and effectiveness of the Mental Health Support Teams is notable and is a regional and national example of good practice. This has led to Reading MHST leaders being invited to attend government roundtables in May 2025. However, it is with regret that we must inform the ACE Committee that Reading and surrounding Local Authorities have been unsuccessful with the MHST bid. MHST provision will move to BHFT from August 2025. School leaders have been expressing their concern regarding service continuity to BOB ICB directly.

3.48.   Reading's mature leadership of systems change to improve outcomes for children continues with Reading having picked up the leadership of Neuro Divergent systems change for children across Berkshire, supported by all six Directors of Children's Services, Frimley and BOB ICB leaders and BHFT leadership.

3.49.   ACE Committee will be aware of the complaints from Reading Family Forum and from Reading schools about the impact of changes to the neuro divergent system; and will in parallel note the expectations in proposed SEND Reform that early identification (screening for neuro divergence) is a core element of early help/support for all children nationally. Reading is leading by example, providing strategic transformation leadership in this area. This strategic transformation aims to improve the way Berkshire supports neurodivergent children by identifying their needs early and providing the right support. It involves collaboration across Berkshire between local authorities, schools, healthcare providers, and families. With the right tools and strategies, the hope is to create a more effective system that benefits all children, especially those with neurodivergent strengths and needs. It intends to introduce a needs led, rather than diagnosis dependent, system of support for our children.

3.50.   This project is expected to take 18-24 months to fully implement. It will include creating a collaborative approach involving families, school leaders, social care providers, and other partners to implement neurodivergent screening across Berkshire. The process will involve:

1.   **Communication**: Working with local families and schools to co-design the proposed changes.

2.   **Planning**: Setting up a steering group to oversee the changes and review screening tools that could work best for Berkshire.

3.   **Testing**: Running workshops in each local area to test how the strengths/needs tools work and adjusting them to fit local needs.

4.   **Training**: Providing training for educators and other professionals on how to use the screening tools.

5.   **Implementation**: Rolling out the new approach across Berkshire, with close monitoring of how it's working and making adjustments as needed.

3.51.   We anticipate the conflation in the Berkshire system between children presenting with complex trauma and presenting with Neuro Divergence to be one of the foremost curious questions that our systems leaders will need to pay close attention to in this work, and adapt our support system for children accordingly. A Berkshire wide Board of Directors of Children's Services, Directors for them Health economy and lived experience colleagues

was established on the 11th May 25 and a Berkshire wide event will be hosted in Reading on the 27th June to review national evidence based practice for neurodivergent screening (please note our Berkshire families will name our collective approach) has been organised. We will keep ACE Committee informed of progress.

3.52. **Emotional wellbeing: next steps**

3.53. Following the important learning from the SEND Thematic Audit programme, and the recognition of the indications of the effectiveness of this programme from the Local Government Association (LGA); a specific multi-professional dip sampling audit of children missing from education (CME) and/or Educated Otherwise with SEND needs is being designed and will be undertaken in Quarter 1 25/26. We expect this to yield rich intelligence to inform future service design and commissioning.

3.54. A continued partnership approach to improving children's mental health with a focus on building the skills and resilience of our local communities, parents and carers, by offering training and workshops to those people most important to children's wellbeing, has continued.

3.55. In partnership with Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (BOB) ICB and through the development work associated with SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities), we have identified that there is opportunity to reconsider the emotional and mental health system, moving from a traditional medical model of diagnosis and treatment, to a more preventative model of whole system support, which is well developed in Reading schools as outlined above. There is also commitment to begin a more strategic conversation about the approach to commissioning across the system (BFfC, RBC and ICB).

3.56. The partnership is continuing to develop and embed our Autism Growth Approach in 2025, which focuses on all children having a positive experience of being in school; including training from the Autism Education Trust, workshops for parents, Intensive Interaction and specialist training, and the application of this learning in the revised Ordinarily Available Provision and Graduated Response guidance.

3.57. **Strand 4: Preparing for adulthood**

3.58. Preparing for adulthood is an area of significant strategic focus for the newly formed SEND Strategy Board.

3.59. The panel for preparation for adulthood is established and overseeing improved transitions and preparation for adulthood work across the partnership. Transition work in Year 9 upwards is an area of focus and is being addressed through joint working for children aged 14+ between Brighter Futures for Children and Adult Social Care. This continues to be an area of particular strategic focus for improvement.

3.60. Coproduction with local young people and families, a Preparing for Adulthood Guide has been developed by the Communications team and recently approved by the new SEND Strategy Board in October 24.

3.61. BOB ICB leaders and Reading Families Forum led a Transitions whole systems event and discussion with young people, parents/carers and professionals to develop practice and learn from the experiences of young people transitioning to adult services and eradicate unwanted variation. A Community of Practice has been established to share and embed learning.

3.62. The pilot to develop supported internships in Reading has been taken up by young people with EHC Plans and led to successful outcomes for eight young people. Partners like the RBHFT continue to work hard to create employment opportunities for SEND young people.

3.63. **Preparing for adulthood: next steps**

3.64. Transitions continues to remain high on the agenda for parents and carers. The experience of transitioning from children's to adult's social care is benefitting from particular dedicated

attention, as a key area of continued improvement. This is a specific area of focus for Reading's SEND Strategic Board,

3.65. Integrated commissioning is crucial for the onward development of the SEND system for Reading's children and to make adequate preparedness for adulthood (and readiness within the adult system to receive young people with complex lifelong needs). This is a specific area of strategic focus for Reading's SEND Strategic Board.

3.66. A clear Commissioning Strategy, with a five year forward view, is being developed for SEND children (0-25) with a view to transitioning successfully to adulthood, bringing the BFfC, RBC and ICB Commissioning functions into closer partnership, and building on progress that has been made individually in specific areas. Priorities include:

- o Ensuring individual young people requiring transition to adult services are considered early (from age 14) and actively, and effectively, planned for together by education, health and social care providers, to ensure clear partnership planning and investment, with families, in preparation for adulthood (in close partnership with Work stream 5).
- o Ensuring sufficiency of Special Educational provision (for more complex children) from Early Years to KS4, based on existing forecasting (in close partnership with Work stream 2).
- o Taking a transformational approach to the service design and commissioning of a renewed needs-led whole system approach to SEND (moving away from a medical model), to be more responsive to the needs of children and families and improve the accessibility and effectiveness of timely support (in close partnership with Work stream 3).
- o Ensuring the effectiveness and delivery of Integrated Therapies, and specifically commissioned services, in reaching the children that need support in a timely and effective way (with demonstrable impact on outcomes for children).
- o Co-design of Supported Living and Respite provisions, based on the analysis of need, and in close partnership with families and children's leads.
- o Dedicated resource to support employment pathways into adulthood for SEND young people, building on the learning from supported internships.

3.67. Employment Education and Training for young people with SEND remains a key priority. Developing more pathways to fulfilling destinations for all young people with SEND remains an important priority for the partnership. Increasing links with Reading's business community and expanding the offer of supported internships are key objectives for 2025.

3.68. Developing college places and post special school provision for continuing participation, enablement and positive activities for young people with Physical Disability and Profound and Multiple Learning Disability remains a priority.

3.69. Further developing the housing pathway and the SEND pathway for young people not known to Early Help or Children's Social Care was planned for 2024, but has not yet progressed. Leadership of SEND Workstream 4 has been reinvigorated to progress these actions.

3.70. In order to support the timely progression of the areas that require leadership from this workstream, the strategic focus, membership and leadership of workstream 4 has been reviewed and is being reinvigorated.

3.71. **Strand 5: Short breaks**

3.72. The dedicated area on the SEND Local Offer providing information, advice and guidance on short breaks, continues to be well received. Co-production with Reading Families Forum, Special United and the wider SEND community-based services developed further in 2024 with a conference with families reviewing the quality and availability of provision, and reviewing that information is accessible, meets the needs of local families and that the services commissioned are structured around the feedback provided.

3.73. Progress is being made to enable the systematic collection of short break information for all children, to enable forward planning and strategic forecasting for this cohort of children. A new system is expected to go live in early 2025.

3.74. The Family Intervention Service offer a brokerage service to vulnerable parent/carers helping them to access short breaks. This support has enabled many families and children to access universal short breaks.

3.75. Reading's Accessibility Strategy has been reviewed and updated to respond to learning and feedback from families, and changes to the landscape of provision in Reading, following a large expansion of Additionally Resourced Provision in the proceeding twelve months.

3.76. The Family Information Service has proved effective in helping the partnership better understand the feedback from commissioned providers and this is also an integral part of how local offer information is communicated to families. The Family Information Service capture feedback from parent carers and evidence of positive outcomes to further improve our offer. This co-productive approach to engagement has resulted in the creation of various short breaks.

3.77. **Short breaks: next steps**

3.78. System developments to enable central registration for short breaks is progressing well, to subsequently provide the data/informatics that is required to inform future design and commissioning within the system (in close partnership with Work stream 4).

3.79. Consideration is being given to the sufficiency of Occupational Therapy resourcing, short break and respite provision in response to analysis of current and forecast need (in close partnership with Work stream 4).

3.80. In light of the priorities to develop integrated commissioning, work is underway to develop clearly defined expectations between Adults' and Children's social care services, and in turn with the health economy (e.g., ICB Commissioning, Continuing Care, specialist equipment, etc), to ensure clearly defined roles and responsibilities and expectations for integrated planning and commissioning for children with complex needs, spanning Children and Young People Disability Team and children in special educational settings.

4. Contribution to Reading's Strategic Aims

4.1. Improving services for children with SEND will directly improve engagement of young people in education, and as a result engagement in employment and training. These actions and outcomes will directly contribute to the strategic aims of the Council regarding Thriving Communities and an Inclusive Economy.

4.2. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

4.3. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- People first
- Digital transformation
- Building self-reliance
- Getting the best value
- Collaborating with others

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2. No direct environmental and climate implications have been identified regarding the actions undertaken to implement the SEND Strategy 2022-2027. Going forward, delivery of services local to children may reduce transport emissions, thereby positively contributing to Reading Borough Council's ambitions to be net zero.

6. Community Engagement

6.1. The development and delivery of the SEND Strategy is directly informed by coproductions with local families and by the proactive work undertaken with and by Reading Families' Forum and Special United/Me2 Club (i.e., young people's forum), as set out in this report.

6.2. A Coproduction charter is under development with Reading Families Forum to formalise the considerable time and efforts put into coproduction in Reading.

6.3. Reading has recently been highlighted by an independent government commissioned provider that is analysing the effectiveness of coproduction in the country, Safe Lives, as evidencing national best practice in coproduction and Reading has been invited to share this at a national webinar in March 2025.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 The SEND Strategy 2022-27 aims to ensure the changing diverse and special education needs of Reading children are met, to raise the education standards for all and address inequality due to social disadvantage, disability (including multiple complex needs) and/or other protected characteristics, and contributes to the delivery of the Council's equality duties. The strategy will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changing demographics and to ensure that the diverse and special education needs of Reading children continue to be effectively met.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1. Not applicable.

9. Legal Implications

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Financial Implications

10.1. Not applicable.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. The delivery of the SEND Strategy 2022-2027 will continue throughout 2025. A further update on progress will be provided on an annual basis.

12. Background Papers

12.1. **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2022-2027**

https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s18534/SEND%20Strategy%202022-2027.pdf

13. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Reading Area SEND Self Evaluation Framework (SEF)

Reading Area

Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Self Evaluation (SEF)

OCT 2024

Contents

Executive summary

Improving outcomes for children, young people and families with SEND is at the heart of Reading's partnership vision for SEND. Together, we want to build an inclusive Reading, where all of our children can thrive and diversity is embraced, supporting our children to become the independent and fulfilled adults of tomorrow.

The Reading Area SEND Strategy 2022-2027, clearly articulates Reading's vision for children and young people (children) with SEND. This Reading Local Area Partnership SEND SEF seeks to demonstrate the progress that Reading is making against the aims set out in the SEND Strategy 2022-2027. Reading's vision is that:

"All children and young people with SEND will be supported through the provision of the right support at the right time to be as independent as possible and have their emotional, social and physical health needs met. They will have choice and agency in adult life and be able to access and navigate services to lead rich and fulfilling lives and flourish in a healthy, thriving and inclusive borough."

We will do this by ensuring:

- SEND is everybody's business, embedded in the practice of all those that work with children, young people and families

- 'co-production' happens at every level – 'working with' families not 'doing to'. Co-production is at the heart of what we do: changing the way in which we work together with families operationally and strategically

- we deliver the right support in the right place at the right time, ensuring the availability and development of high quality universal and specialist provision to meet needs locally

- we improve outcomes for children and young people. We focus on working together to identify and assessing needs early, and through transparent and evidenced based decision making, ensuring equitable resource allocation to meet agreed outcomes and support aspirations

- we unlock all the resources in the borough of Reading.

The full version of the Reading Area SEND Strategy 2022-2027 can be found here.

In addition to aligning with the commitments of the Reading SEND Strategy 2022-2027, this 2024 SEND SEF aims to fulfil the brief set by the Department for Education in its updated guidance on Annex A (available here).

What we are proud of

- Reading has a broad range of effective and well-regarded SEND support and emotional health services available to schools and families, with more than 200 support services in the voluntary and community sector.

- We are increasingly working towards being partners that provide support based on the needs of our children and young people and families with SEND, informed by the lived experience of our children and families, our partnership data, needs analysis and qualitative evaluation of practice.

- In the last academic year, 241 additionally resourced provision places for children with SEND (from early years through to KS4) have been added within Reading, significantly increasing the number of specialist placements available within the borough.

- There has been significant investment in Reading in working closely with the early years, school and further education providers supporting Reading's children with SEND. Frontline workers and leaders in these settings have been trained in therapeutic, autism and assessment skills resources (SERTS), to promote the inclusion of every Reading child and to keep learning engaging and interesting. This supports the system to set high expectations for learning for our children with SEND, working closely with families and personalise learning for each individual child, by identifying the sources of stress in education and trying to reduce them, adapting learning, making a plan together to meet needs and build on each child's strengths, interests and talents.

- The Reading Inclusion Support in Education (RISE) team has been set up, providing free, expert SEND advice to all Reading schools.

- Reading's Mental Health Support Teams have been further extended and now cover all Reading schools

- We have continued to learn together as strategic and operational partners and this learning has informed new service design and adaptation, including the recently commissioned new services in Health, in particular the key worker service and Dynamic Support Register for children at risk of Tier 4 admission and the Learning Disability CAMHS Service.

- Reading's Portage service has been redesigned in response to significant demand and has reduced waiting times for children and families and demonstrates notable improved outcomes for the children the service supports.

- Reading's investment in Early Years SEND advisory support is well received by settings and by families and has led to above national and regional average achievement for Reading's children with SEND in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- A high percentage of Reading's children looked after (CLA) are also children with SEND supported by Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and Reading is proud to continue to achieve above national averages for CLA educational attainment.

Attainment outcomes for 2022/2023 exceeded national outcomes for CLA in the following measures: Key Stage 1 Maths; Key Stage 2 Reading; Key Stage 4 Attainment 8; Key Stage 4 Progress 8; Key Stage 4 GCSE English and Maths 9-4 and 9-5.

- There have been no permanent exclusions for children looked after (CLA), including children with SEND for a number of academic years. The Virtual School continue to challenge schools who are considering exclusions for children we care for (CLA). Feedback to support this includes:

"We have found the Virtual School very supportive and open to discussions around the needs for the students, especially those with high needs, or potential risk of PEX, being very solution-focused in order to support the students, whilst also recognising the efforts made by school, and the other support measures in place. This also extends to helping identify the correct support needed for CLA students too." – Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Headteacher, Reading School.

- Reading has consistently completed a higher proportion of assessments on time as compared England (and the southeast) over the past three years. In 2023, Reading completed 74.9% of assessments within 20 weeks compared to 50.3% nationally. As of July 2024, our year-to-date timeliness completion rate is 82%

- Reading benefits from a high quality of local special schools and has invested in high quality resourced provision in mainstream schools

- Provisional 2024 KS2 results have 24% of Reading children with SEND achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (RWM) compared to 22% nationally. In 2023, 30% of children with SEND achieved the expected standard in RWM in Reading and England

- Reading has relatively low numbers of young people (16-17yr olds) with SEND 6.6% (7.8%) who are NEET

- Reading has participated in the supported internship Programme over 2023/24 and will participate again in 2024/25 with a view to increasing the number of supported internships available to young people in Reading. In the 2023/24 academic year we increased the number of young people accessing supported internships from 10 to 17

- Delivery Partners Ways into Work and Shaw Trust also reached out to mainstream secondary schools and local employers to expand the offer alongside delivering training for employers on disability awareness and neurodiversity which was well received and attended.

Children were asked: "Can you share your experiences with the support provided by the BFfC and the SEND team?"

One child stated that "Service is good. Especially the EHCP, (the) annual review is good for finding our special educational need. (It) helped our families to understand our additional needs."

Another child said that they "like(d) the EHCP annual review because it improve(d) the(ir) support after considering the criteria."

However, one child shared that they "Don't know what BFfC do." Once their teachers explained about BFfC's work around EHCPs, they then said that they "don't know much about EHCP plans either." This last comment was shared with colleagues in the post-16 SEND team, to ensure that the team are keeping children as engaged in the EHCP process as possible.

We continue to raise awareness with children and young people to help understand the nature of ordinarily available and graduated support for children with SEND in Reading. This has included SEND strategic leads sitting with Special United, SEND children, to talk about their lived experience of SEND support in Reading.

Key areas of development

- Parents and carers remain concerned about the waiting times for children and young people needing autism and ADHD assessments despite significant investment into the service. The diagnostic pathway has experienced unprecedented demand in line with the national picture. Pathway redesign has commenced supported Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (BOB) ICB.

- The emotional and mental health system is under pressure, and children with SEND often encounter waiting times for support reflecting national picture of increase in prevalence. New MHSTs have been allocated to Reading through the ICB and national programmes.

- There has been a lack of timely access to speech and language therapy at an early stage to avoid escalation of needs (both for children under 5 and school age children), a helpline system has been introduced to provide more timely access to support and advice, the impact of this is being closely monitored and early indications are positive.

- Reading has an insufficient number of local specialist placements for children with learning difficulties (including PMLD) and for children with Autism/SEMH, and overall lacks a coherent strategic commissioning approach for SEND children (all age) that

coordinates health economy and local authority/BfFC commissioning and plans forward into adulthood

- In the context of significant training and support investment in education, to support school and early years staff in their practice with SEND children, there remains variation in inclusive practice in mainstream schools and quality of transitions needs further development, the development of the RISE team is directly responding to this need

- We are concerned about a rise in suspensions of children with SEND and have initiated partnership qualitative analysis and review. We are intentionally exploring an indicative picture that suggests that children identified as having SEND are more likely to have been suspended for physical assault on an adult or another child.
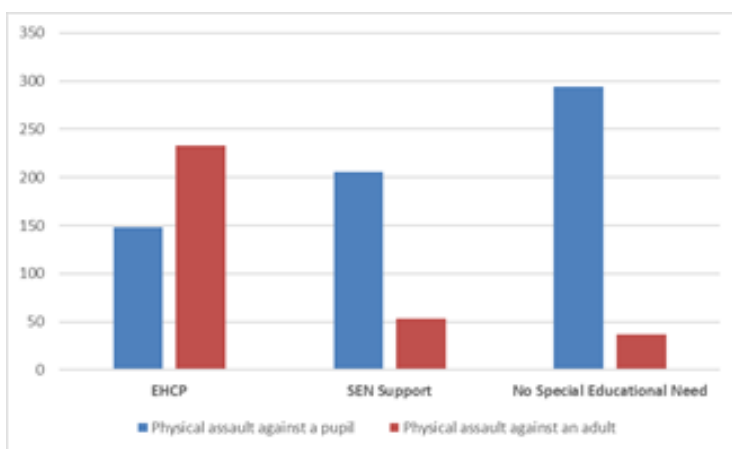
- Lower than average performance of children with SEND in Writing, which is an overall development area for all children in primary education in Reading. School Effectiveness activity is specifically focusing on the acquisition of basic skills to address this issue for Reading children.

- There is a need for more routes into employment for post 16 children with SEND, including expansion of supported internships, and a wider post 16 educational offer for young people with SEND.

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a collaboratively owned BFfC and ICB data dashboard, needs to be developed to better support joint strategic planning and progression towards a more integrated approach to commissioning

Reading Data Snapshot

Reading has just under 60,000 children aged 0-25 years. In 2023 approximately 17% (6,476 children) of under 16s lived in relative low-income families (lower than the national average of around 20%).

However, in 2024, 22% of our primary aged children were entitled to free school meals, lower than the national figure (24%) similar at secondary age where the entitlement to free school meals was less than the national figure (18.8% compared with 24.1%). 7% of children

are living in one of the 20%LSOAs (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) in England that are exposed to an unhealthy retail environment and poor air quality.

These include neighbourhoods in Abbey, Battle, Park and Redlands. The main contributory factors for this are proximity to unhealthy retail environment and air quality.

Reading serves a richly diverse community with nearly 60% (57.8%) of children with global majority heritage. The largest groups are those from White Other (10.3%) and Asian Indian (12.9%). Nearly 40% of children in primary schools speak English as an additional language (22.8% nationally) while at secondary school level around 32.3% (18.6%) do so.

Population (0-25)[1] 59,094

Population (0-17)[1] 37,929

Pie chart: 4 years & under 18%, 5-9 years 18%, 10-14 years 18%, 15-19 years 19%, 20-24 years 27%

23,973 School Age Children live in Reading [3]
19,327 attend Schools in Reading

37% Children have English as an additional language with
150 different languages spoken [4]
54% Children have a minority ethnic heritage [4]

60 State funded schools and nurseries in Reading
34 LA maintained schools and nurseries in Reading [2]

17.5% Children live in relative low income families
14.1% Children live in absolute low income families [5]

1,968 Children with a Reading EHCP [2]

Source: 1 ONS Mid Year 2023 2 BFfC data Jul 2024 3 DFE CBM 2023 4 School Census 2024 5 DWP 2023

Demand for education, health, care and needs assessments (EHCNAs) remains high. Reading currently has 159 children within statutory assessment as at 24 May 2024 which is up from 143 reported in April 2024.

The timeliness of EHCPs for Reading's children and young people compares favourably to the South East and national performance. **Table 1** illustrates the trends in Reading's EHCP numbers and 20-week timeliness data.

Table 1: A table depicting Reading's EHCP numbers and 20-week timeliness data as current figures and as trends over the last 12 months

Education Health Care Plans Aug-24	Contract KPI	Previous	Current	Target		(basis)	On Target	12 mths		YTD	LA	2023 SE	Nat
Children with an EHCP		1966	1968	1606	270	SN21	R ▲		Increase	0.7%	10.2%	9.1%	11.4%
New EHCPs on Time	1	82%	96%	70%		CM	G ▲		%	81%	74.9%	46.1%	50.3%
New EHCPs issued		11	24						No	136	327		

Overall, Reading has 1968 EHCPs, this represents 5.11% of Reading's 0-25 population. This percentage is higher than that of our statistical neighbours, the South-east and England. Work is ongoing with public health to understand why Reading has a higher proportion of EHCPs.

Early analysis indicates that Reading has a higher number of children with speech, language and communication difficulties (SLCN) than the national average (13.1% compared to 8.7% nationally, based on the most recent 22/23 DfE dataset) and also has a lower proportion of children deemed ready for school (Reading is in the lowest quartile for school readiness nationally). These factors may contribute to higher-than-average EHCP rates. **Table 2** depicts 5-year EHCP trends in Reading and nationally.

Table 2: A table depicting 5 year upward trend in EHCP numbers in Reading, Reading's statistical neighbours, the South East and England

Year	Reading	Southeast	Statistical Neighbours	England
2019-20	3.72%	3.24%	3.00%	3.13%
2020-21	3.94%	3.58%	3.30%	3.40%
2021-22	4.13%	3.91%	3.61%	3.72%
2022-23	4.47%	4.36%	3.93%	4.09%
2023-24	5.11%	4.76%	4.30%	4.47%

As can be seen from Table 2, Reading has a consistently higher than average percentage over the last five years of its 0-25 population with EHCPs than either national, regional or statistical comparators. This data is represented graphically in **Figure 1**, below.
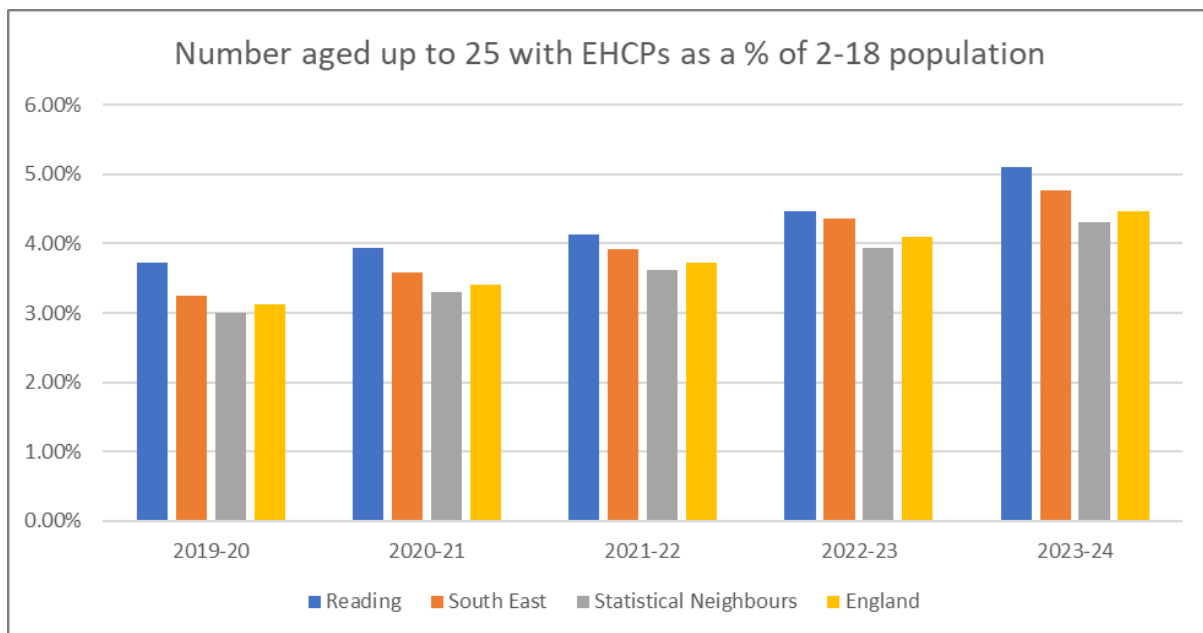
Figure 1: A bar graph depicting the number of children in Reading with an EHCP aged up to 25 as a percentage of the 2-18 population as compared with the South East, Reading's statistical neighbours and England (Source: DfE)

The data clearly indicates that the number of children with an EHCP in Reading is growing year on year. The whole systems changes to the SEND system in Reading, suggest that the rate of growth of EHCPs has slowed in the most recent period, but this requires longer term tracking.

Analysis derived from Reading's engagement with the Department for Education's 'Delivering Better Value' (DBV) project highlighted that **the needs of 31% of Reading children with an EHCP, could have had their needs met without an EHCP**. In mainstream, the figure was higher, with 40% of children with an EHCP being identified as children whose needs could have been met without an EHCP.
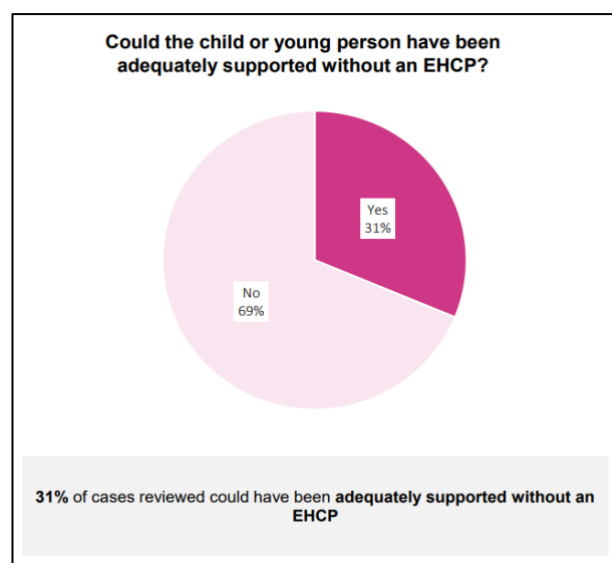
What this tells us

Number of residents with EHCPs in Reading, South East, Statistical Neighbours and England has continued to grow over the last five years

....

Higher proportion of resident children with an EHCP in Reading

Reading: 5.11%

South East: 4.76%

Statistical Neighbours: 4.3%

England: 4.47%

This has been true for each of the last five years

....

14.3% increase in the number of Reading children with an EHCP.

This is higher than the national rate of increase over the same period (9.3%)

....

Since 2020, this represents an increase of 20.2% in the percentage of children with EHCPs

Figures 3, 4 and 5 below illustrate the current and shifting needs profiles of Reading children with an EHCP.

As can be seen, Reading has seen a significant rise since 2019 in the number of children with EHCPs presenting with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) as their primary area of need. In order to respond to this shift in the needs of Reading's children with SEND, the RISE team, in collaboration with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust and the University of Reading has initiated a number of projects targeted at increasing SLCN support in Reading (for further details see below).
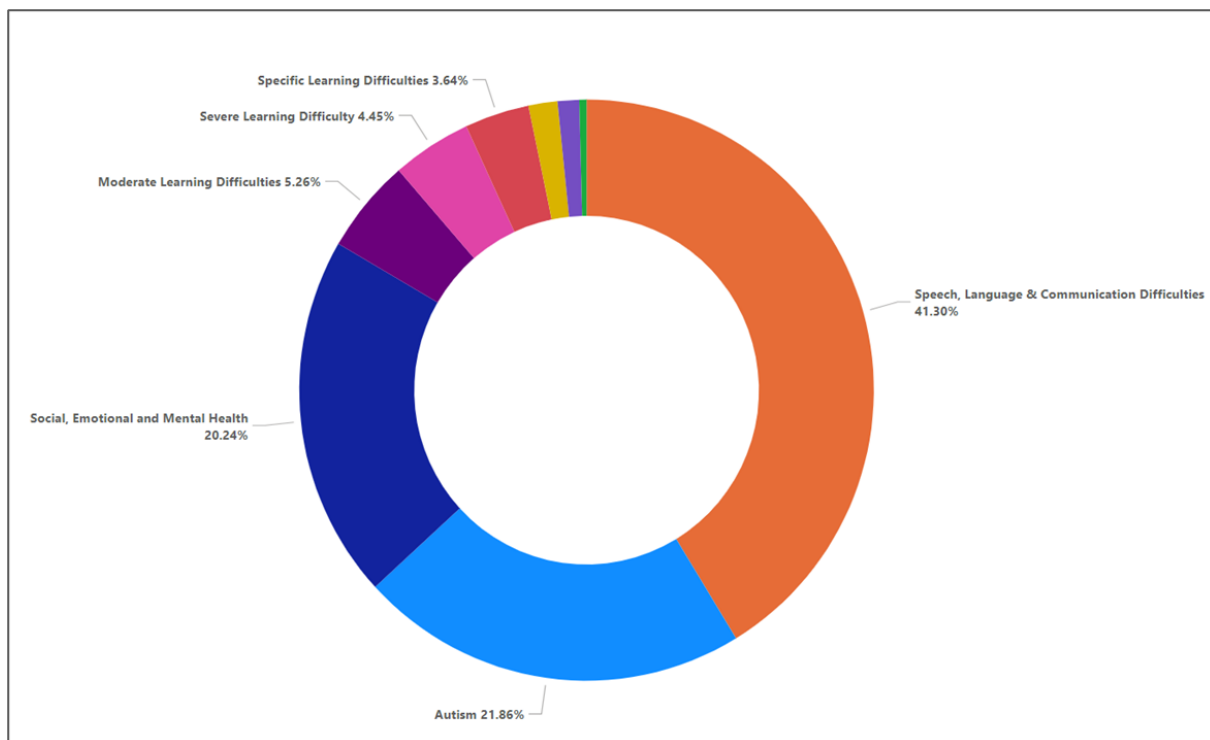
Figure: SEND demographics of EHCPs issued to Reading children in the 2023/24 academic year
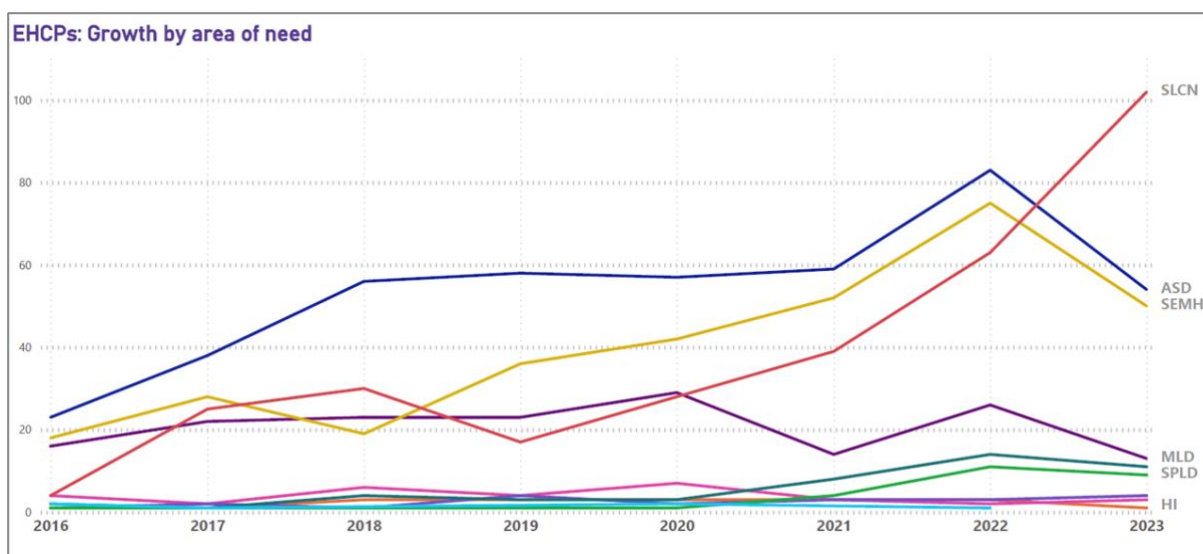
Figure: The changing demographics of all Reading children with an EHCP, 2016-2023

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What this tells us

Of EHCPs funded by Reading, issued in 23/24: **Speech, Language & Communication Difficuties (SLCN) is now the main area of need at 41.3%** of all children with an EHCP (102 Children)

....

Since 2019, where there were 17 children with SLCN as their main area of need, **this represents an increase of:**

500 % +

....

What this tells us

Autism is overall the highest category at 32.99%, with 666 autistic children.

....

Since 2019, where there were 413 autistic children, **this represents an increase of:**

61%

....

Reading's Autism (ASD) rate at 33% is in line with England (32.2%) and SouthEast (32.4%)

....

Combined Autism,SEMH and SLCN are aligned: Reading (68%), Regional (68%) and National (66%)

In response to these predominant needs, Reading's partnership leaders have undertaken to jointly respond to these shared pressures on services.

For example, BOB ICB has invested in additional services to support children with autism whilst they wait for help and support and Brighter Futures for Children hosts an Autistic Education Training hub, which has undertaken evidence-based neuro-positive training with all schools on autism and implementation of the five-point plan. In addition, learning from good practice in early years, rapid changes have been undertaken to introduce a speech and language helpline in Reading, to enable prompt access to speech, language and communications advice. Early indications suggest that this is having positive benefits in terms of timely support to families.

In terms of the demographics of children in Reading on SEND support, we see a similar – though not identical - profile to our children with EHCPs. **Figure 5** depicts the SEND profile of Reading's children on SEND support in 2022/23.
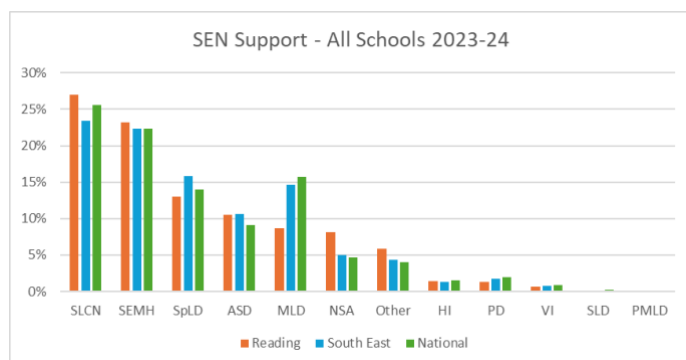
What this tells us

3,318 children were receiving SEND support in 2022/23

SLCN, SEMH, NSA and other needs was higher than the South East and England

....

MLD and SPLD percentages are significantly lower than the values for the South East

Figure: SEND profile of Reading's 2022/23 SEND support cohort

The tables (below) illustrate the difference in the SEND profiles of Reading children on SEND support in primary, as compared with secondary, school. These differences inform the choices that Reading makes as a Local Area when it comes to making decisions about how best to support children with SEND. For example, work with the early years teams has focussed on early intervention in speech and language to ensure that more children are able to start school with a level of communication that will enable them to access the curriculum (for further details see 'Early Years' below).

Table illustrating the SEND profile of Reading children in primary school on SEND support

SEN Support - Reading Primary Schools	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	DoT
Speech, Language and Communications needs	38.31%	39.36%	36.78%	↘
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	20.35%	19.82%	21.35%	↗
SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need	7.41%	7.76%	10.00%	↗
Moderate Learning Difficulty	9.64%	9.72%	8.94%	↘
Specific Learning Difficulty	9.59%	8.79%	8.08%	↘
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	6.34%	6.88%	6.54%	↘
Other Difficulty/Disability	4.62%	4.00%	5.24%	↗
Physical Disability	1.52%	1.51%	1.20%	↘
Hearing Impairment	1.37%	1.46%	1.15%	↘
Visual Impairment	0.66%	0.49%	0.48%	↘
Multi- Sensory Impairment	0.15%	0.10%	0.14%	↗
Severe Learning Difficulty	0.05%	0.10%	0.10%	-

Table illustrating the SEND profile of Reading children in secondary school on SEND support

SEN Support - Reading Secondary Schools	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	DoT
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	26.54%	26.32%	25.34%	↘
Specific Learning Difficulty	19.79%	18.68%	23.63%	↗
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	16.60%	17.74%	18.96%	↗
Moderate Learning Difficulty	6.95%	5.94%	9.07%	↗
Speech, Language and Communications needs	8.59%	8.58%	8.36%	↘
SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need	11.10%	12.64%	5.30%	↘
Other Difficulty/Disability	4.54%	4.72%	4.40%	↘
Hearing Impairment	2.32%	1.98%	2.07%	↗
Physical Disability	1.93%	1.98%	1.44%	↘
Visual Impairment	1.06%	1.13%	1.17%	↗
Multi- Sensory Impairment	0.39%	0.28%	0.27%	↘
Severe Learning Difficulty	0.19%	0.00%	0.00%	-

The significant neuro-positive and therapeutic thinking investment in education settings in Reading (from Early Years to KS4), has been an important whole system investment to support education providers to maximise child-centred adaptations and promote inclusion of all children in Reading education provision.

SEND and Children Looked After Reading Data Snapshot

Time has been taken to review and understand the shared needs of children with EHCPs and children receiving support from social care services. Reading has seen 13.1% increase in Children Looked After (CLA) with EHCPs and is above South East and national averages.

Reading has seen a greater rise of children looked after (CLA) with SEND than the national or South East picture, from 50.3% to 63.4%
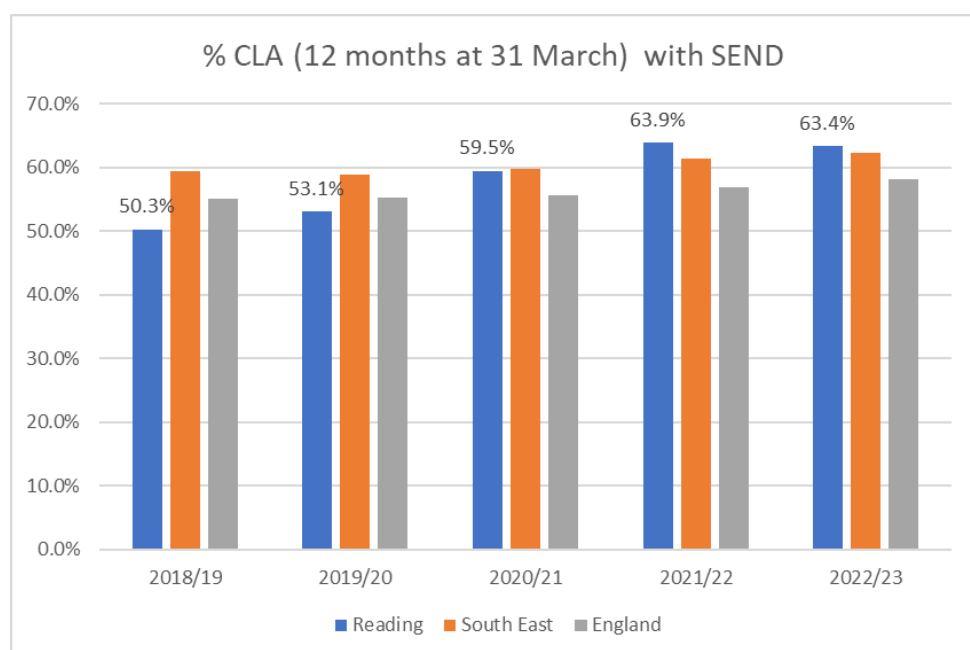
What this tells us

There is a greater rise in Reading %CLA with SEND, than for South East or England

....

Reading %CLA with SEND has increased from 50.3% to 63.4%, an increase of

13 percentage points.

Significantly Higher than for South East and England

Reading Local Area SEND Self Evaluation | Version 1.0 | AK Oct 24

The work of the Virtual School is one example of how as a system, we enable a coordination across the partnership to support a careful consideration of each child looked after with an EHCP on a child by child basis. This is an important aspect of coordinating the operational support for children in care with SEND, reviewing the effectiveness of the support offer and to problem solving difficulties with partner agencies too.

CLA with EHCPs

	In-Borough	Out-Borough
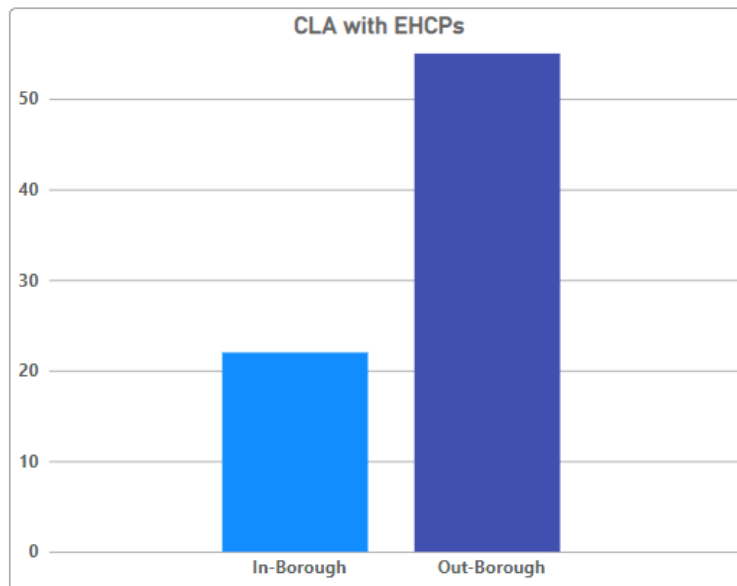
Year: 23-24
Funding LA is Reading

The analysis of children looked after demonstrates that the most common need of Reading's children looked after who have an EHC Plan was Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Virtual School Emotional Health and Wellbeing Triage Support Group, which is held monthly with representatives from: Virtual School, Health, Children in Care CAMHs, Primary Mental Health, Educational Psychology and Children's Social Care; 63 children and young people have been discussed during the last financial year. In April 2024, 61.8% of children discussed at the group had a reduced SDQ after 1 year.

CLA with EHCPs by area of need

CLA & Care Leavers - EHCPs by Age and Need

CLA BY NEED

Pie chart values:
- ASD, 15.34%
- HI, 0.61%
- MLD, 12.27%
- PD, 1.84%
- PMLD, 5.52%
- SEMH, 50.92%
- SLCN, 7.36%
- SLD, 4.91%
- SPLD, 0.61%
- VI, 0.61%
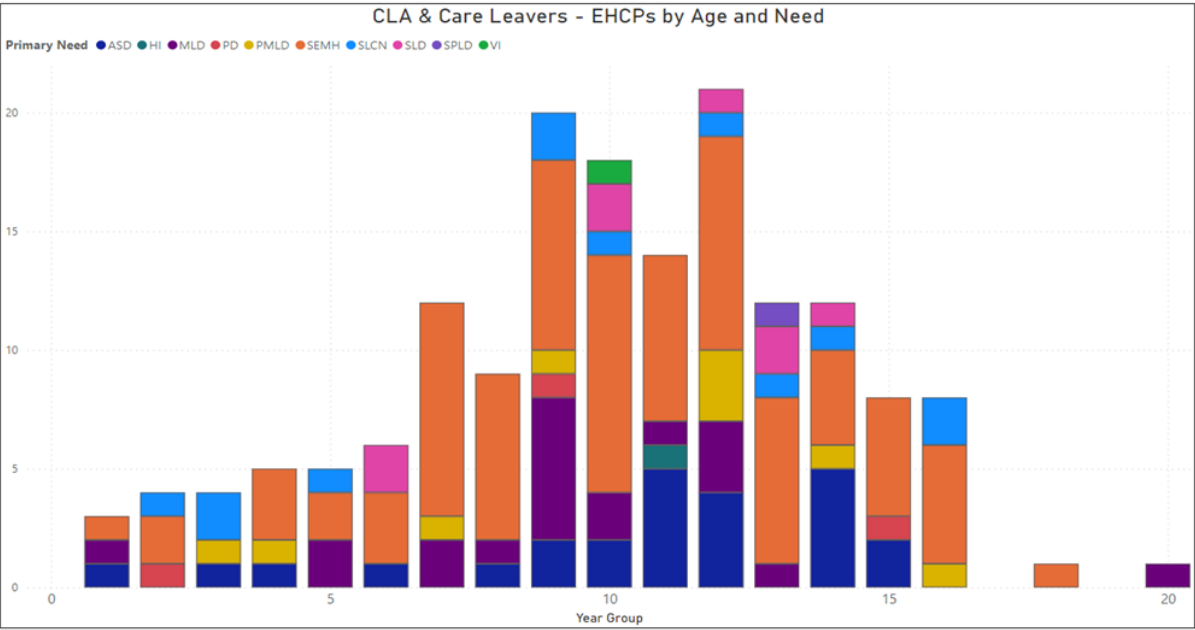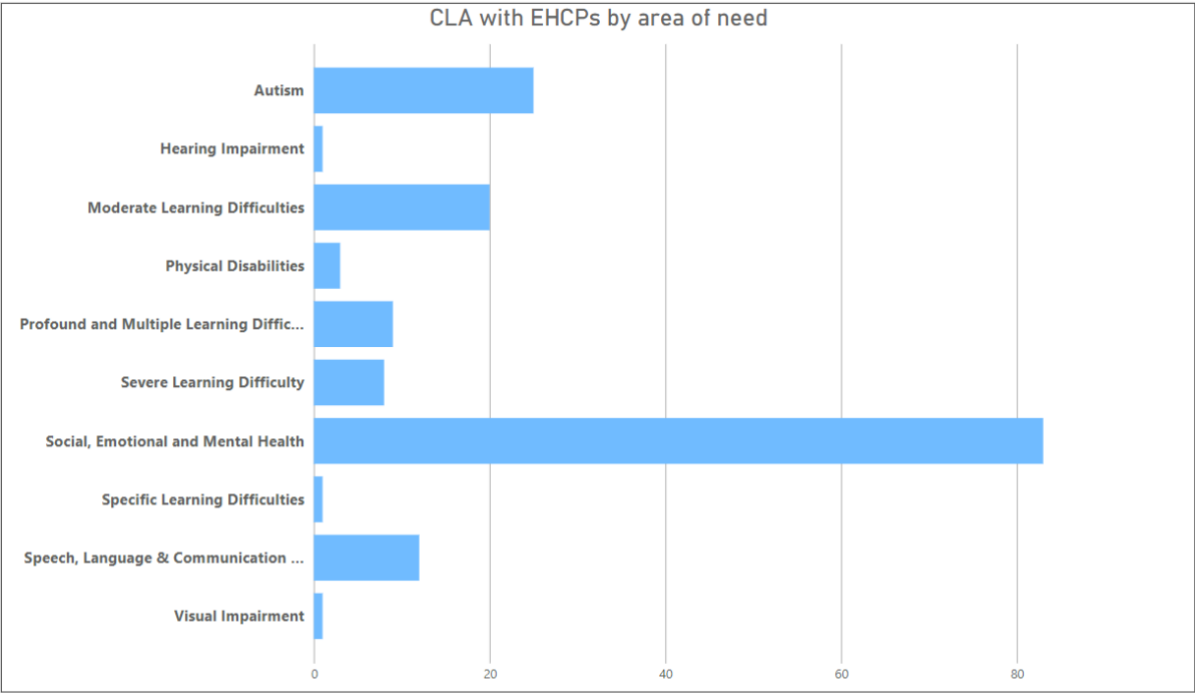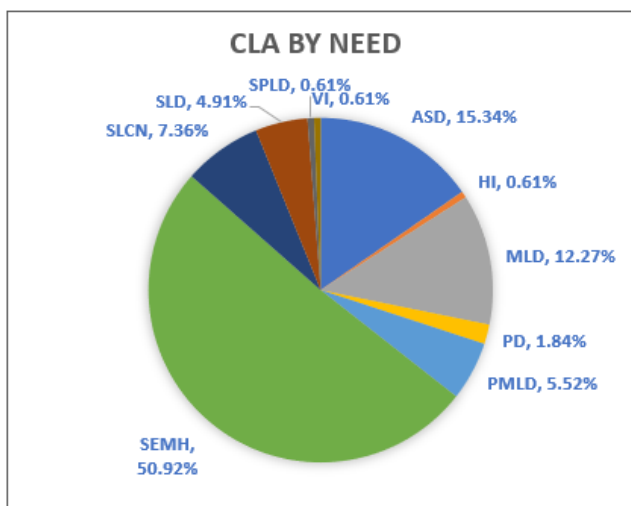
What this tells us

51% of CLA have **SEMH as the primary need.**
This is prevalent across most year groups

ASD at 15.3% and **MLD at 12.7%** are the next highest categories

ASD Autistic Spectrum Disorder		**SEMH** Social, Emotional and Mental Health	
HI Hearing Impairment		**SLCN** Speech, Language and Communication Needs	
MLD Moderate Learning Difficulty		**SLD** Severe Learning Difficulty	
PD Physical Disability		**SPLD** Specific Learning Difficulty	
PMLD Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty		**VI** Vision Impairment	

Responding as a whole system to the social, emotional and mental health needs is a strategic leadership priority for Reading's strategic leaders (see further information below).

Reading Local Area Partnership SEND Governance Structure

Reading has benefitted from consistent SEND governance and leadership, and a strong commitment from strategic partnership leaders and from families with lived experience.

The Integrated Care Board have developed a governance structure to ensure senior leaders have oversight on SEND across Reading. The governance structure is pictorially depicted here:

Reading Area Strategic Governance for SEND
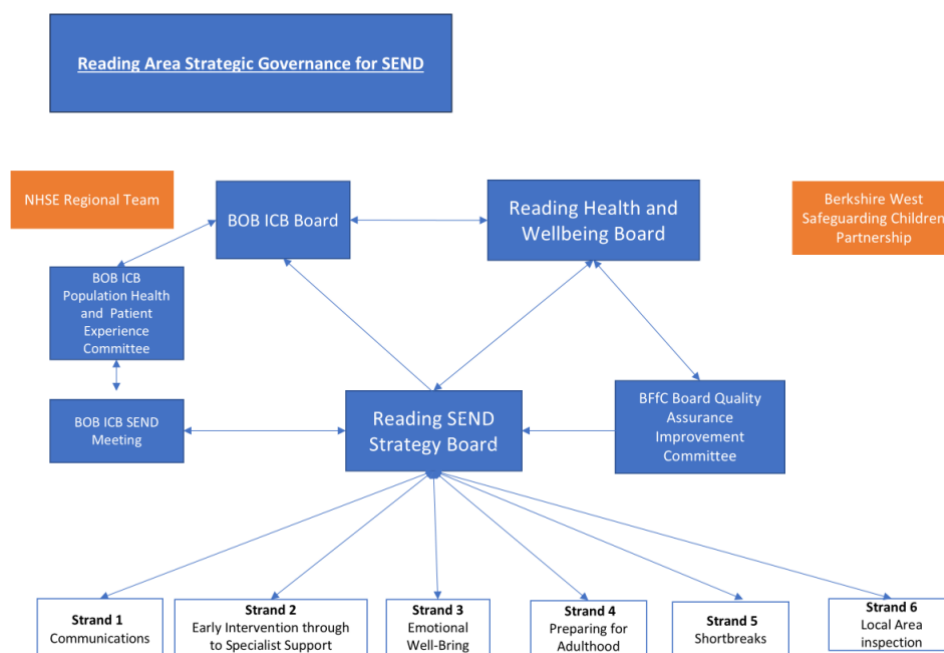
The governance structure for the SEND Strategy Group is currently being reviewed, to ensure sufficient senior leadership capacity in SEND leadership.

Following review of the progress of the SEND workstreams in summer 2024, strong improvements and activity have been identified in a number of the workstreams, leading to strategic review and focus of the workstream activity moving forward in light of the progress that has been made and the analysis of strategic risks and gaps in the system.

Outcomes and experience of SEND children and families

Children and Young People's Needs are identified in a timely way

Strengths

- Reading's Early Years team supports children under 5 with SEND from as early as 10 months old. The EYFS outcomes for children with SEND in Reading demonstrates progress above the regional and national averages.

- Resources to support identification in the early years: including an expanded early years inclusion fund and training offer have been effective in supporting improved outcomes for SEND children in the early years.

- Families benefit from the support of the SEND brokerage service, which provided timely support and advice to 2,482 families in 2023 alone

- The partnership with voluntary and community providers in Reading is strong, with more than 200 local support services listed in the Local Offer to support children and families with SEND

- An additional 241 Additionally Resourced Places (ARPs) have been created in education provision in the previous period (2023/24) in response to child need.

- Increased resources through the Portage team with two additional Portage workers appointed to the service and a revised Portage service offer (including groups available through children's centres and drop-in sessions for families) has been implemented, resulting in earlier identification of needs from a wider range of partners.

- The extended range of SEND support and advice available to assist schools with identification and response to need, through the Reading Inclusion Services in Education (RISE) has been well received by schools:

  "I would absolutely recommend RISE to other schools. It has been invaluable in supporting our students and staff" (Hugh Farringdon Secondary School Leader).

  "We are really, really satisfied with all of the support. The resources have been brilliant" (Thameside School Leader)

- Our EHCPs are completed in a timely way, comparing favourably with other areas, providing timely understanding of, and response to, children's needs

- All children considered for EHC assessment are routinely screened for social care needs

- All referrals to the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust & the Royal Berkshire Hospital Trust are triaged by the relevant clinicians to ensure that children with the highest level of need are prioritised.

- The ICB commissions support for families on pathway for autism assessment, including parent advice/workshops, access to "Young Sharon" online resource, Neurodiversity newsletter & Autism Assessment Team helpline, to ensure the system of support is more needs led.

- Joint commissioning arrangements have been developed for TellMi Counselling, children looked after (CLA) emotional health support and Mental Health Support Teams.

- As part of the Thrive model, a helpline is now available for neurodiverse young people and their families which can be accessed by all (no requirement to be on a pathway)

- Health attendance at EHC Panel has improved feedback to schools on graduated approach for children with speech and language or physical / motor needs

- The Health Visiting (0-19) service within Berkshire Healthcare provides several contacts for all children within Reading including a new birth visit, a three and six month face to face contact. This provides relevant healthcare advice and promotion and fosters closer relationships with families to support early identification and targeted support for any additional needs.

- All children in Reading are invited to attend a two year developmental review with a member of the Health Visiting team. The team use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) tool to support this review which aids early identification and

onward signposting as appropriate. In addition, the service is looking to embed the use of the Early Language Identification Measure (ELIM) to support early identification of speech, language and communication difficulties. The service is working with children's centres in the locality to increase the uptake of these reviews including working towards offering integrated development reviews with Early Years settings. Those children where additional needs are identified are moved to a targeted caseload and offered additional support and/or signposting. There is a lead Health Visitor for SEND who works to support the wider 0-19 team in embedding good practice to meet the needs of children and their families.

- The Health Visiting (0-19) service has undertaken a targeted piece of work to support children and their families with school readiness and where children with specific needs have been identified there is a seamless transfer of care directly from the health visitor to school nursing teams working within mainstream schools.

- Reading has committed to being a learning system and having introduced mediation to support finding solutions with families who have been disappointed with the outcomes of statutory assessment, Reading Family Forums 2024 survey demonstrates that of ten families who experienced mediation, eight reported significant improvements in communication with statutory partners and improved outcomes for children.

- The wait time for initial wheelchair assessments and follow up appointments has been reduced to zero.

How do we know we are making a difference – portage

The number of children referred to portage has increased by 121% since 2017. Since 2021-2022, referrals from the Health Visiting team to Portage have more than doubled and there is also positive evidence of earlier engagement from Early Help, Paediatricians at the Dingley Child Development Centre, all indicating a positive trend in earlier identification of needs.

Children accessing the Portage service are very likely to achieve their development goals with 95% achieving these goals over the last 4 years. This demonstrates the positive impact Portage has on children's development both through teaching children directly as well as supporting parents to understand how they can continue to support their child's development.

The table below illustrates the developmental gains made by children accessing support from Portage 2017-2022. Parental feedback continues to be positive evidenced by the feedback received on the transition questionnaires completed by parents. Parents report an increased confidence in playing with and supporting their child's development.

Table: The developmental gains made by children accessing support from Portage 2017-2022

% Achieving Long Term Goals	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Reading %	89%	95%	96%	96%	97%
Boys %	89%	95%	95%	95%	98%
Girls %	90%	95%	96%	96%	92%

How do we know we are making a difference – early years

To further improve support for EY children with SEND in Reading, the EY team have adopted a revised approach to EY advisory support that includes a dedicated SEND helpline, support to promote effective use of Ordinarily Available Provision, partnership visits, along with individual child visits for those whose needs cannot be met through universal provision, an intensive targeted coaching approach for providers with high SEND or low confidence levels, reviewed regularly to assess impact, working with school Reception classes and class teachers to support with SEND and transitions from nursery to school (an offer which has been coproduced with schools, parents, EY settings and the RISE team), developing the 'Readiness for School' project in collaboration with family hubs, the Communications team, wider EY teams and RISE to reduce the number of children starting school unprepared, Inclusion funding devolved to maintained nursery schools (who make up 33% of inclusion funding applicants), updated EY SEND hub on BFfC website Under 5s with SEND - Brighter Futures For Children, and the creation of a dedicated web page for parents of children under 5 with SEND Under 5s with SEND - Brighter Futures For Children.

The number of EHC plans issued for children under 5 has continued to increase overall since 2018 with 100% increase by 2023. For early years children, this can partly be attributed to earlier identification of needs and a more clearly defined process for Early Years settings in how to apply for an EHCP.

The impact of early years support can be seen in Reading's SEND children are achieving a good level of development (GLD) has increased and is above the national average.

GLD data for Reading children with SEND and nationally, 2017-2023

	Year	2017	2018	2019	2022	2023
SEN achieving a good level of development	SEN	23.9%	16.4%	21.2%	24.4%	23.9%
	SEN National Average	23.5%	24.0%	24.3%	18.8%	19.9%
SEN GAP	SEN Gap Reading	52.3%	61.9%	54.4%	47.4%	44.2%
	SEN Gap National Average	52.5%	53.1%	53.1%		

					Not available	Not available

Areas for development

- As a partnership, we have recognised that there are some children presenting at school in reception/Year 1 with potentially significant SEND needs that were not previously known to any local service.

- Speech, language and communication needs are predominant needs for many of Reading's children, like many areas in the country, Reading has struggled with timely access to speech and language support for children.

- The wait times for autism and ADHD specialist assessment for Reading's children remain too long and although have improved since the last SEND inspection they still stand at 2 years.

- Children, young people and families with SEND in Reading who also need additional emotional health support, can struggle to get access to timely help and support.

- Reading has a well-established SEND youth forum, Special United. Many young people from Special United have raised concerns about not being fully included in schools, colleges and employment. These concerns are being addressed through the RISE team, the PINS project and local employment forums.

- There has been a significant investment in early years and education training, evidence-based resources and support to maximise our collective identification of SEND, and make adjustments in education settings, but we recognise that the quality and consistency of this identification and support remains variable.

- SEND children are very visible in suspensions and exclusions from school (overall, suspensions and exclusions are starting to reduce in Reading).

- The early help and support commissioned to support families, is not yet integrated across the ICB and BFfC and RBC, integrated commissioning and service design would support improved outcomes for children.

What we are doing

- A qualitative audit approach (partnership learning audit) has been introduced to understand the journey of children with SEND needs identified in reception/Year 1 who were previously not known to universal or targeted services.

- Berkshire Healthcare children and young people's therapy service is now offering an advice line for parents of children under 5 with speech and language needs and professionals. There is now no waiting time for an initial conversation with a speech and language therapist

- Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust is now offering weekend clinics for children on the autism and ADHD pathways in order to gather pre assessment information, as

a way of speeding up the assessment process. The neuro diverse assessment pathways and the wider clinical model of the system is subject to active leadership review across the ICB and BFfC.

- Berkshire Healthcare has developed Sensory processing online workshops which are open to all parents and carers, professionals and young people who may have concerns in relation to a child's sensory needs. They aim to give practical advice, and you do not need to have been referred into the service to access them. The BHFT children's website also has practical sensory processing information and advice as well as videos which can be accessed at any time.

- The ICB is in the process of redesigning speech and language therapy and occupational therapy services in order to improve access and strengthen the Ordinarily Available Offer.

- Berkshire Healthcare is streamlining neurodiversity assessment pathways, including a new pre assessment NDQ questionnaire for parents to cut down length of assessments, prioritise the children who need to be seen more quickly and identify which type of assessment is needed. Length of assessment will be varied depending on complexity.

- The Therapies Review in the ICB is intended to: 1) improve child access to support by providing more timely help in the right place at the right time; 2) strengthen the EHCNA pathway to become more needs led; 3) ensure the new SEND framework is reflected by the therapies services; 4) review pathways for children who need more specialist/complex therapeutic care.

- The investment in the emotional health preventative support in Reading continues to be a priority for all partners. BOB ICB has invested in additional emotional health system investment in the voluntary and community sector, the MHST offer will be expanded to all Reading schools from September 2025 and the Educational Psychology and Primary Mental Health services lead emotional health clinics in all schools, to support and advise schools.

- Commissioning and design of the SEND and emotional health system would benefit from further strategic integration across the ICB and Local Authority/BFfC, and strategic discussions about how this might best be achieved have commenced

- SEND children continue to feature notably in the suspensions and exclusions from school. A partnership 'key lines of enquiry' exercise has been initiated to understand the picture of suspensions and exclusions and the support available to children in advance of suspension or exclusion, and in line with the Education Strategy, a mature support and challenge conversation with school leaders is underway to focus on the importance of the inclusion of all children. The learning from this analysis is informing the onward development of Family Help (early intervention support).

- There is an evident gap around access to timely emotional and mental health support for children and young people with SEND,

- Across the system it has been recognised that the current default model of diagnostic provision for children and young people with neurodivergent behaviour rather than a needs led model has led to lengthy waiting times for diagnosis without the system working together to identify and meet the child's needs. This has been identified as a shared gap by BFfC and ICB leaders.

- It is anticipated that neuro diverse whole system transformation, the therapies review spanning community providers and emotional health system development will be key ICB development priorities for 25/26.

Children, young people & families participate in decision making about their individual plans & support

Strengths

- Families have access to independent advice via SENDIASS, highly rated by parents (100% said service was easy to contact, advice & information was very useful and support had made a difference to their situation, July 23 feedback survey)

- In the Early Years Reading's children with SEND achieve above the regional and national average for their development.

- Ofsted told us in our inspection in our children's services ILAC inspection in April 2024 that we were providing a good partnership service for Reading's children with disabilities, including evidence of a 'competent', 'skilled', 'highly attuned' and 'child-focussed' workforce operating in integrated partnership support of disabled children.

- The SEND Team has been restructured to place an emphasis on the involvement of children and young people in the initial assessments of their EHC Plans and a feedback loop has been introduced to evaluate this change for all families who have EHC Plans issued in the future.

- In response to feedback from families, together with our health colleagues in BHFT and the ICB, we have established a new Learning Disabilities Mental Health support service and ensured Crisis mental health support is available 24 hours a day.

- Reading Family Information Service (FIS) have been recognised with national awards in 2021 and 2023 for the quality of support offered, and the way that the Family Information Service promotes the participation of parents and carers and children and young people.

- The SEND Local Offer (LO), which is co-produced in collaboration with Reading Families Forum, other parents through the SEND Local Offer network and through Special United. Involving children and their families has increased awareness and usage of the Local Offer.

- In response to feedback from families, a simplified 'Roadmap' of the SEND offer has been co-designed with families. An intentionally EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion)

humble approach has been taken to reach out to families of diverse heritage and identity in the co-design of these materials.

- Co-production with young people is also really important in Reading, this has including working in partnership with Special United to help improve information and access to local services, as well as blogs from every event

- Despite over a 200% increase in requests from families for Portage support since 2017[1], an expanded Portage service in Early Years has reduced the time families in Reading have waited for help significantly and shows significant improvement in outcomes for 100% of the children and families the service has helped.

- Children and young people receive impartial information, advice and support as part of the "Ready, Steady, Go!" Programme and Learning Disability Annual Health Checks to enable them to make informed choices about their health in the future

- Health Plans are routinely coproduced with families

- 'Reasonable adjustment passports' have been introduced in Health (Royal Berkshire Hospital), coproduced with the young person, which young people can take to health appointments with them

- Complex Needs Health Transition Plans have been introduced at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. These are coproduced by the clinician and the young person and their family at transition clinic appointments.

- The RBH has an embedded Patient Engagement Strategy.

How do we know we are making a difference – SEN Parent Survey 2024 views on involvement/ coproduction

Parent survey results are very strong with 106 parents and carers completing a 2023/24 survey. Reading Strategic Leaders value and pay careful attention to the lived experience of parents and carers, informing areas of good practice development, risk identification and mitigation and further development. The strength of co production through the Local Offer is leading to improved access to support as well as coproduced solutions for families.

The SEND Local Offer (LO) is co-produced in collaboration with Reading Families Forum, other parents through the SEND Local Offer network and through Special United. Involving children and their families has increased awareness and usage of the Local Offer. Outreach & Events – Local Offer co production sessions each quarter – are taking services into the community to help inform parent carers about SEND support in Reading, this included SEND targeted information events, transitions events and community groups. Total of 21 outreach sessions attended in 2023.

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[1] 2.21 (increased from 57 to 126 since 2017)

SEND Brokerage service is provided to any family or young person with SEND to access information, and services to support their needs. Supported 2482 families by providing a brokerage service in 2023.

Peer review with Hackney Local Offer – navigating each other's local offer's sites – using the Mott McDonald framework, involving parent carers and young people, evidenced a strong and impactful offer, as well as areas for further improvement. The outcome of the review is published on the Local Offer feedback page.

The SEND Local Offer Newsletter published three times per year (spring, summer and winter) has a significant reach, to 1,792 parent carers registered on the Local Offer mailing lists to receive regular updates from the Local Offer (almost 80% engagement and coverage for parents of children with an EHCP). The Local Offer is also set up to syndicate with Berkshire Health Foundation Trust (BHFT). Our systems directly connect to ensure parent carers can access all the information they need via the SEND Local Offer. This was a co-produced project between all the Berkshire LAs, Parent carer forums and FIS/Local Offer teams, and has been very successful since it was implemented in 2015.

Robust links with the voluntary, community and faith sector have helped outcomes for families, children & young people, accessing specialist community-based services to improve social activity access and support; and schools' SEND Local Offer Information Reports are leading to improved access and understanding for families.

An auto update tool now added to the new platform, which means schools can update their information anytime (not just annually). This online process was introduced in 2023, and we have had a good response from schools as it is much easier to update, but also allows parent carers to access the information in an accessible format. 80% of school and 80% of childcare setting updated their SEND Local Offer Information reports (2023) having the information accessible has resulted in parent carers making informed choices around schools and childcare settings.

Areas for development

• Multi agency audit of EHCPs has identified that the young person's voice is not consistently strong in all EHCPs and the quality of EHCPs can be variable.

• There is a lack of feedback / data on the impact of individual Health Plans, including Complex Needs Transition Plans

• Reasonable adjustment passports are being rolled out and promoted with families and clinicians

- Educational outcomes for children with SEND from KS1 to KS4 are below national and comparator performance. KS4 performance is as follows:

- The picture of suspensions and exclusions for SEND children (EHCP and SEND support) is too high, it requires active engagement of all partners and direct action in partnership with schools

- Post 16 transition to adulthood and education, employment and training opportunities are currently under developed and insufficient in number and breadth to meet Reading's children's needs and maximise aspiration and potential.

What are we doing?

- A qualitative audit programme for EHCPs has been formalised, to routinely review the strength of child voice in plans, and to thematically explore areas of practice development for the SEND system in response to feedback from families. A new Section A form will be introduced in September 2024 as feedback from families and SENCOs indicate that the current form is not as user friendly as it could be. The SEND Team has been restructured to create a new assessment team focusing purely on the assessment process and engaging parents and children from the very start of the process.

- Reasonable Adjustment passports are a new development, which are subject to review, to ensure that they are being embedded

- BOB ICB is introducing a quality assurance framework for the under 18's Learning Disability Annual Health Checks with GP's acting on feedback from parents and carers. The framework is to be developed against national standards.

- Following a Transitions to Adulthood event with young people, parents carers and professionals to develop practice and learn from the experiences of young people transitioning to adult services and eradicate unwanted variation, a Community of Practice has been established to share and embed learning.

- As strategic partners, analysis of suspensions of Reading children with SEND from schools is under way and will inform the practice focus of the RISE service (SEND support for education settings) and opportunities for partnership early identification of risk, including the design of Family Hubs.

- The Director of Education is undertaking support and challenge conversations with school leaders to promote inclusion in all Reading schools and to share the findings of the suspension key lines of enquiry analysis.

- The RBH Transition Steering Group is working on a system for getting feedback on health plans.

- There is a particular strategic partnership gap in KS4 education providers engagement in improving educational outcomes for SEND children (below national and comparator analysis from KS1 to KS4). The picture of suspension and exclusions for SEND children, further compounds an adverse impact on outcomes for SEND children. A new strategic support and challenge conversation has been undertaken with schools leaders, including CEOs of MATs at KS4, has been initiated, to create a shared systems leadership imperative to create a systems commitment to inclusion.

- A review of Post 16 pathways to training and employment is required, to develop a comprehensive roadmap of support for SEND children. Investment in a dedicated SEND employment worker (cosponsored by Adult and Children's) would be of benefit.

Children in Reading with SEND receive the right help and support at the right time

Strengths

- Reading leaders have developed and disseminated a wide range of resources to support early years, schools and other settings, to support children and young people with SEND. This has included guidance on what should be "ordinarily available" provision for children with SEND, Autism Education Trust and therapeutic thinking in schools training and support in summer 2024; and an enhancement of the Graduated support advice for education settings. There is an extensive suite of early years resources.

- Children & Young People's Integrated Therapy Service materials for supporting children with speech & language or occupational therapy needs have also been produced and shares.

- There are a wide range of preventative services which can be accessed without EHCP, including Educational Psychology Service, Early Years Team, and the expanded Mental Health Support Teams, which will be available to every Reading school from September 2024. RISE and School Effectiveness team leading continued development and embedding of therapeutic thinking approaches in all schools.

- Reading Local Area Partnership is participating in the national Participation for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) pilot. This is a partnership between the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care, and NHS England to enable Integrated Care Board (ICBs) to support the wider ambition to build capacity in mainstream education so all those working with children and young people with SEND have the knowledge and skills to do so. It seeks to develop innovative ways of working to support the needs of neurodiverse children, learning from the Autism in Schools pilots.

- In the early years, to increase the flexibility and availability of support, funding streams are available for children without an EHCP.

- All new/ first time entrants to the Youth Justice Service are routinely reviewed by Education, Access and Support, to ensure that their education provision is supporting these children to maximise their potential; 38% (2024) of YJS children have SEND needs.

- All Academy and LA maintained schools within Reading have been supported to significantly improve the quality of SEND support over the past year, regardless of the education governance model (e.g., Academy and maintained).

- The range of additionally resourced provision in mainstream schools has been hugely expanded in the past 12 months with an additional 241 places, quality assured by BFfC with schools.

How do we know we are making a difference – developing more specialist provision

An increase in the number of children requiring an EHCP has resulted in a rise in the number of children requiring specialist settings. In order to respond to this, Reading has created an additional 241 places in additionally resourced provisions (ARPs) for children aged 0-16 since April 2023, a rise of 219%.

There are further plans currently at the committee stage to create an additional maintained special school within Reading to ensure that Reading children can have their needs met in a local school in a timely fashion. At the post-16 level, the SEND team has worked closely with two local, specialist providers of supported internships and Reading has increased the number of children with SEND accessing supported internships consistently for the last three years.

This year, the SEND team collaborated with a provider to negotiate placements for children who had SEND, but who did not have an EHCP, to ensure that this did not serve as a barrier to their accessing this educational offer.

Feedback from a headteacher on the impact of having an ARP:

"It has been fantastic to have the funding for our ARPs in place since Easter. It is already making such a positive impact to pupils and staff - largely due to the school being able to fund and organise CPD for our ARP staff e.g. Attention Autism and Intensive interaction training (and more!).

Skilled and knowledgeable staff who have positive relationships with the children is key to the success of our ARPs; therefore, it makes sense to invest in upskilling adults to ensure that interactions with children are effective in supporting children to make progress in their communication and language skills. Without funding, this would not have been possible. Having ARP funding has also meant that the school feels valued for its investment over the last decade on meeting (or putting in best efforts to meet) the needs of children with SEND. Staff morale is higher as a result and other schools ask for visits to see what we do."

This headteacher is one of six Reading schools who are set to benefit from over £1m of capital investment in improving facilities for children with SEND in their schools. Whilst some frustration has been expressed owing to the amount of time these works are taking (owing to delays in planning etc.), staff are nevertheless looking forward to the benefits these works will bring once completed. Figure 2, below, depicts the plans for one specialist SEND playground due to be installed in a Reading primary school.

PROPOSED NEW PLAY AREA

TRAVERSE WALL ROUND
GREEN MESH FENCING
BASKET SWING
EXAMPLE GOAL END
JUNGLE CLIMBER MINI
IN-GROUND TRAMPOLINE
SPINNING BOWL
LOG WALK, BALANCE BEAM & STEPPING LOGS - ROUND
JELLY BOARD
SUPERNOVA

The plans for a specialist SEND play area due to be installed at a mainstream Reading primary school

- A whole system approach to prioritising the emotional health of children has been undertaken in Reading. Recognising the pressure on getting more help emotional health services, a range of alternative VCFS and BFfC led emotional support is also available to Reading's children and young people, including through Educational Psychology led emotional health surgeries for all schools and support available for mental health needs including emotionally based school avoidance, through EPS, Primary Mental Health Team and Mental Health Support Teams

  - Children awaiting assessments from the Neurodiversity Service receive support including on line resources and support groups. Support Hope and Recovery/Resource Online Network (SHaRON), SHaRON | Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Autism Berkshire Autism Berkshire Reading - Autism Berkshire and the digital platform TellMi which is jointly commissioned by the Integrated Care Board and Brighter Futures for Children.

- A new CAMHS Learning Disability Service has been introduced to address a previous gap in service

- A 24 hour mental health crisis service has been introduced to give rapid access to support and prevent A & E admissions

- Berkshire Healthcare have been part of a project to implement PEACE which is a Pathway for Eating disorders and Autism developed from Clinical Experience, in the CYP ED service. The project has now ended but the learning has been embedded within the Berkshire Eating Disorders (BEDS) CYP team and next steps are to distil and roll out the

learning that is relevant to the adult eating disorders provision and to the wider CAMH (& other CYP) services

- BFfC's in house residential short breaks services, provide overnight respite and are rated Good by Ofsted.

How do we know we are making a difference: early mental health support

The Mental Health Support Team (MHST):

The MHST supports children with SEND in mainstream schools across Reading (including all Reading schools from September 2025), in specialist resources attached to mainstream settings, and in specialist settings for children with SEMH needs. Over the past year (i.e. 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024) MHST has supported 577 children in total. Of these:

- 158 children were reported to be on SEN support,

- 28 children were reported to have EHCPs.

Of these 186 children with SEND, 83 were closed because treatment was completed, 32 no longer needed treatment, 33 were referred to other services, 32 did not attend or requested discharge, 1 was a duplicate referral and 3 moved out of area. Of those who have closed to MHST, the goal ratings for children on SEN support and those with EHCPS were at 3/10 before MHST intervention, and 7/10 after MHST support (a higher score indicates being closer to the goal). The Routine Outcome Measures (Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale, RCADS) scores also show that they reported a reduction in anxiety and low mood, as illustrated in the table below (mean change score -4.62).

Since September 2023, MHST has started to record if a child is neurodivergent. Over the last 9 months (i.e. 1 September 2023 to 31 May 2024), MHST has supported:

- 55 children with autism, suspected and diagnosed,

- 38 children with ADHD, suspected and diagnosed.

Of those who have closed to MHST, the goal ratings for the neurodivergent children were at 3/10 before MHST intervention, and 8/10 after MHST support. The RCADS scores also show that they reported a reduction in anxiety and low mood, as illustrated in the table below (mean change score -7.31).

In addition to direct work, MHST supports the whole school approach to mental health in a wide variety of ways (e.g. by attending Senior Mental Health Lead Network Meetings, circulating key documents/information, discussions at MHST Planning Meetings, delivering assemblies, staff training, coffee mornings for parent/carer(s), etc). MHST also plays a key role in signposting and liaison between services (e.g. by responding to referrals, completing triage assessments, responding to enquiries and attending multi-agency meetings, including the One Reading Partnership Hub). Throughout the year, schools, parents and young people

are invited to complete the Service User Feedback Form, to help us understand the impact of MHST. This is summarised annually and the summary from last year is attached; this report is also available on the MHST webpage – www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/MHST.

Average Feedback Rating of PMHT Consultations (Max 100%) 2023/2024
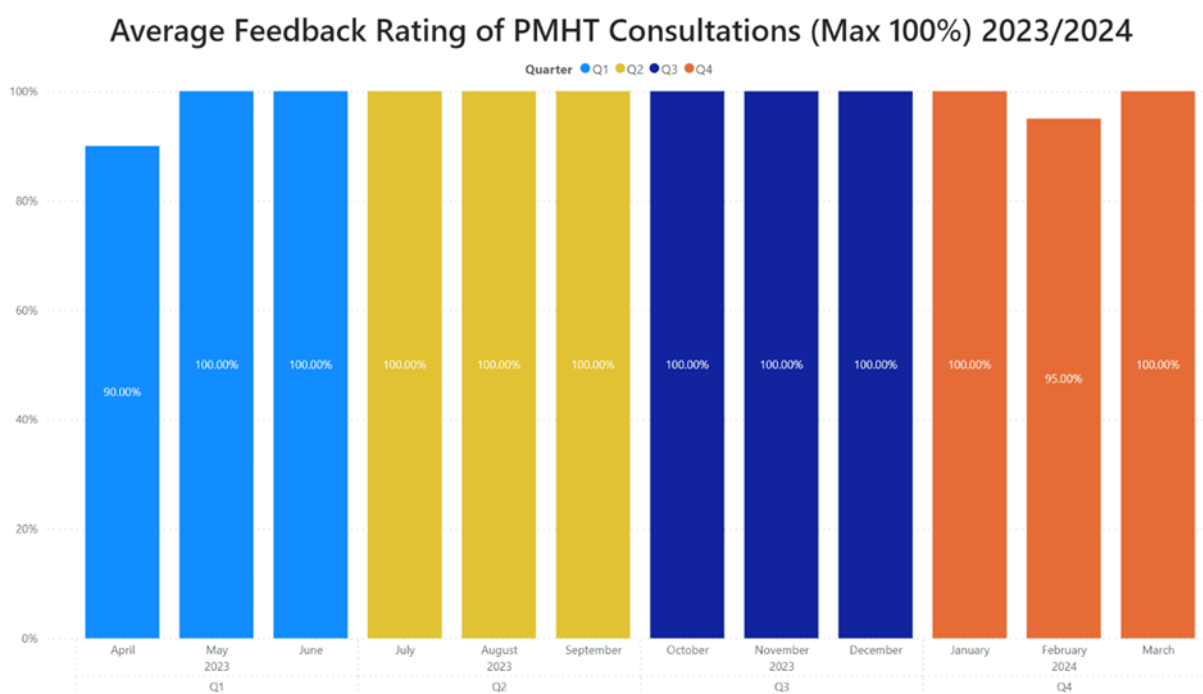
Average feedback ratings for PMHT consultations that took place in the 23/24 financial year

The Primary Mental Health Team serves all Reading schools, including Special Schools. They offer a range of support for schools with children with SEND. The PMHT offers weekly Mental Health Surgeries to all Reading schools (delivered jointly with the EPS); pre and post rating scales are used as part of the consultation process to measure the effectiveness and enable school staff to give immediate feedback. In the 23/24 financial year, 253 children were discussed of which 59 had an EHCP. Figure 8 (below) demonstrates the impact of PMHT consultations - it shows improved confidence ratings of the school staff across the whole of the previous financial year 23/24 (the average % being 98% across all four quarters and Q3 showing 125% improvement meaning all the post scores were over double that of the pre discussion score).

Reading Local Area SEND Self Evaluation | Version 1.0 | AK Oct 24   34

Average % Confidence Improvement MH Surgeries April 23-March 24

Average Confidence Across Year: 98%

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	100%	82%	125%	84%

Average Score Pre Discussion	Average Score Post Discussion
2.13	3.97

No of Surgeries Schools Attended by Quarter

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
29	14	30	29
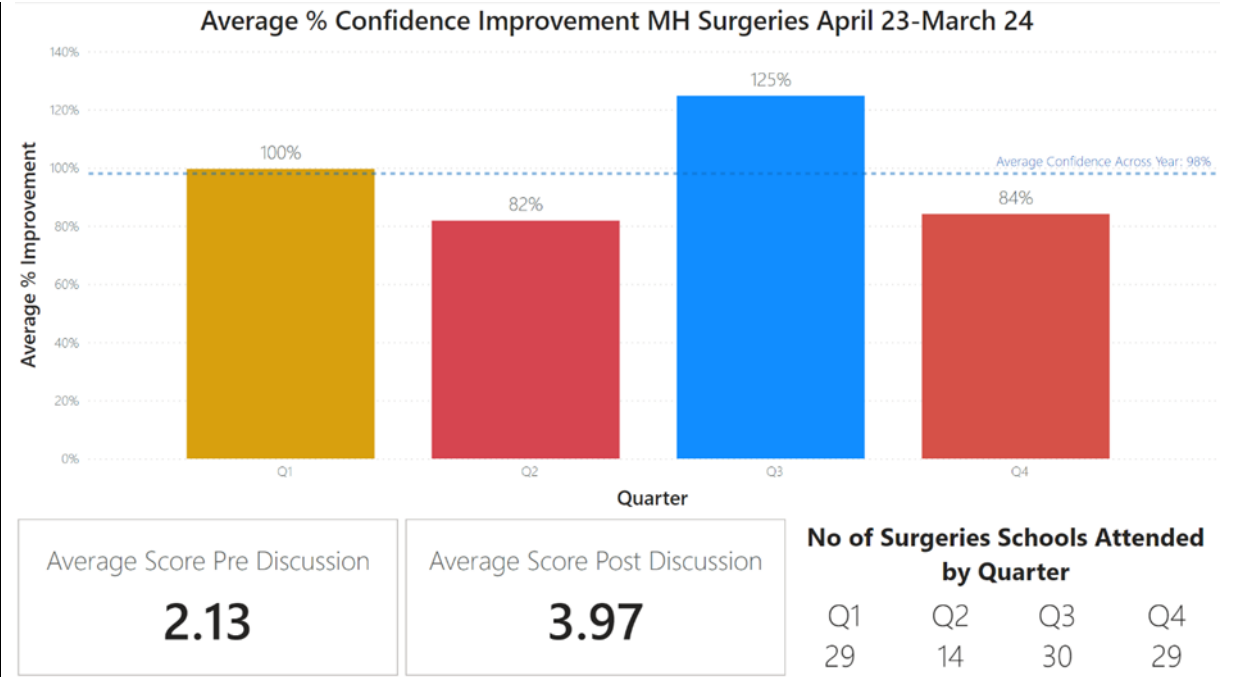
The impact of PMHT school consultations in the 23/24 financial year.

The PMHT has shown consistently good outcomes for our therapeutic interventions. The PMHT predominantly uses child-led measures such as goals-based outcomes which are shown below. The impact of the PMHT work shows 95% average improvement on goal ratings across the last financial year, this includes work with children with SEND.

- Applying THRIVE principles to the Reading system has also been applied to understanding the effectiveness of the getting more help, children's mental health support services i.e., impact on child outcomes. Analysis of Outcome Measures in CAMHS services demonstrates the following improvement in outcomes:

CORC Report July 2024

We are members of the Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC) which undertakes analysis of outcomes data.

113 young people (68.1%) improved and 53 young people (31.9%) deteriorated or stayed the same

62 young people (71.3%) improved and 25 young people (28.7%) deteriorated or stayed the same

374 goals (82.7%) improved and 78 goals (17.3%) deteriorated or stayed the same
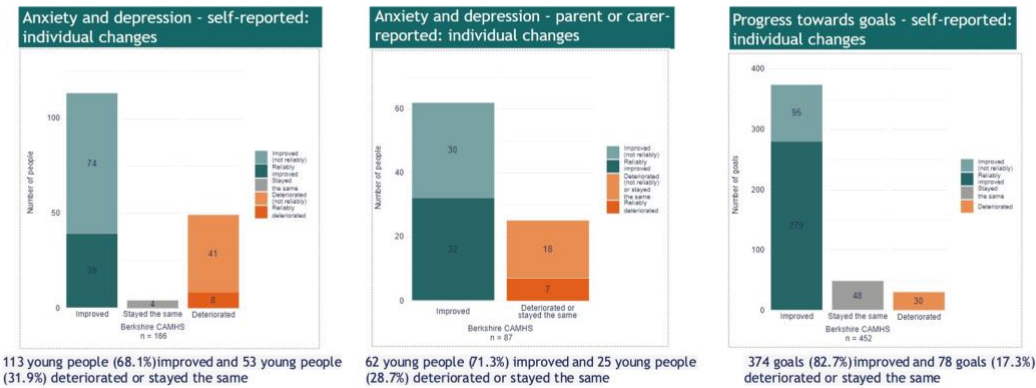
- In addition, a qualitative review of children experiencing greater complexity, demonstrates the benefits of the new key working system for children and young people with multiple needs, in contact with a number of different professionals, as illustrated in Emily's and Leroy's journey below:

How do we know we are making a difference - case studies from CAMHS (Getting More Help)

About Emily

Emily is a 15-year-old female, she has a close relationship with mum and has a younger brother who lives at home.

Following a recent diagnosis of ASD parents are applying for DLA and social worker supporting the family to set up direct payment

Emily has always found social interaction difficult, she has very few 'friends' within school

'Poppy and Ted' are Emily's 'four legged' best friends. Emily also has friends from an inpatients unit but these friendship may not always positive.

Emily is academically able. She was accepted onto the gifted and talented programme when she moved to her current secondary school in Y7. She is now in Year 11. Emily has not been able to attend school since 2020.

Parents separated in 2020. This was difficult for Emily. She has a close relationship with her dad and his new partner. She also feels close to her grandmother and maternal auntie, but they live far away.

Emily's Journey – Pre Keyworking Team

Emily first presented to A&E with an overdose in March 2021. She was assessed by CAMHS following an overdose. She has been seen by private psychiatrist since 2020.
Alleged sexual assault at aged 10, no further details disclosed

The self-harm/overdosing incidents continued. Care moved to CAMHS SCT from private provider. Also supported by Rapid Response Team when in crises. Cycle of discharge and re-present in crises in A&E. 7 admissions between March 2021- Aug 2022

3 referrals made to children social care from various agencies. On a CIN plan twice but case closed without change achieved. Cycle of being referred then closed due to 'no parental concerns identified'. Mum's mental health deteriorated.

Following discharge from T4 unit (Nov 2022) Emily's presentation escalates & reached crises in Dec 2022. Multiple A&E presentations with overdoses and risk-taking behaviours (history of going to the top of a multi-story car park with intention to jump). 4 admissions between 30th Nov 2022 – 10th Jan 2023

Deliberate overdoses, self-harming incidents and suicidal idealisation resulted in admission to **CAMHS Tier 4 day unit between March - Nov 2022**
Received autism diagnosis as an inpatient.

Emily's Journey – Keyworking Team

NHS Berkshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Dynamic Support Navigator (DSN) completed a chronology/deep dive of young person and family journey so far.
DSN met with parents and Emily to look at personalised plan and attended appointments with parents to support and advocate. DSN provided the family's journey to prevent them having to repeat their story time and time again

Young person started engaging with DSN – going on dog walks
Care Education and Treatment Review (CETR) was held - DSN is liaising with all agencies to ensure the actions are being completed in a timely manner.
Appointment map completed with all agencies to enable the family to plan and prepare in advance.
This gives structure to Emily's day and ensures she has no more then one appointment a day.
Referral to SALT and OT completed (sensory need)

Parents feeling, they can no longer manage and wanted psychiatric inpatient admissions
Emily's inpatient admission is imminent.
LAEP Dec 2022 to prevent hospital. admission
Referred to the Keyworking service.

Since Referral:
1x A&E admission
Emily has been on holiday with family abroad.
Meets with a DSN weekly – Emily's views/ needs regularly discussed.
Mid March 2023 completed 6 GCSE mock exams.
Engaging with Therapy for the first time.
Regular professionals meetings – we are working together keeping Emily in the centre
Risk of inpatient admission reduced. RAG rating changed from RED to AMBER.

Support with EHCP application.
Liaising with school for alternative provisions and 1:1 tutoring started
Emily is re-engaging with school.
Waiting to start horse-riding sessions.
Started trampolining.
She has reconnected with some of her school friends.

NHS Berkshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Feedback

Mum's feedback:
'Thanks Monika! You gave me renewed hope which is in short supply right now. So, appreciated'
'Thanks so much for seeing Emily, Monika. She really likes you and it gave her a focus for her day'

Emily's feedback:
'Super grateful for all you are doing'.

About Leroy

Leroy is a 17-year-old young man who is currently under s3 of MHA 1983 in a psychiatric unit and subject to a full care order.

Leroy is interested in animals and drama. He describes himself as a foodie. He loves Caribbean cuisine.

Leroy enjoys English and science and would like to have a job or apprenticeship.

Leroy has experienced a significant amount of adverse childhood experiences. He has a diagnosis of a mixed disorder of conduct and emotions, underpinned and maintained by a disorganised attachment to his biological parents, ADHD, Klinefelters syndrome and Mild Learning Disability.

Leroy is looking forward to gain his own space and sense of freedom outside of the hospital setting. He enjoys utilising his section 117 leave to visit his family and spending time with them.

Leroy is looking forward to having his own space and being home in the community.

Leroy's Journey – Pre-Keyworking Team

Having been raised in a neglectful and emotionally volatile environment, Leroy can present as highly dysregulated. He has a diagnosis of a diagnosis for Klinefelter Syndrome, Mixed disorder of conduct and emotions and Mild learning disabilities.

Leroy is supported within a psychiatric hospital sequestered in his own space. The hospital team found that Leroy struggles to manage and regulate in environments where care and attention are shared amongst other young people. Leroy has a person-centred approach to ensure his safety and the safety of others. In the setting, Leroy has had a high-care approach to support with reduction of incidents of aggression and violence which has progressed to an ongoing care approach.

1. Due to the profound impairments in parenting capacities, Leroy and his siblings have experienced a significant amount of trauma. Because of the adverse childhood experiences, Leroy was removed from the care of his primary caregivers and was placed in the care of Children's Services in 2011. Having been raised in a neglectful and emotionally volatile environment, Leroy was exhibiting high levels of aggression and violence.

3. Leroy has been under high-care psychiatric supervision since September 2019 due to a history of aggressive outbursts and assaultive behaviours, as well as previous charges of assault and criminal damage.

5. Although Leroy continues to exhibit some risk behaviours but overall has been better able self-regulate his emotions and resulting in less frequent and less severe incidents. This has enabled a reduction in his restrictions, including commencing and increasing unescorted Section 17 leave in the community.

Leroy's Journey – Keyworking Team

7 Professional networks have facilitated several meetings, such as CPAs, CETRs, Mental Health Tribunals, and Weekly Transition Planning, to advance discharge planning and search for necessary provisions. Leroy has been part of the hospital-based meetings to ensure his view are obtained. The process has been ongoing for over a year with plans falling through (Properties falling through/ recruitment difficulties).

8 Delays in sourcing placement for Leroy have had a detrimental impact on his mental health recovery. Leroy was becoming more and frustrated by the length of the process often telling staff " I'm stuck in hospital".

6 Active discharge planning commenced in 2022 along with local authority as the clinical team requested community placement with the gradual transition into the community. He presents with ongoing risks (primarily to others) significantly precipitated by the environment and relationship dynamics that are inevitable within psychiatric settings.

9 Dynamic Support Navigator completed a chronology and deep dive of Leroy's journey through services. DSN met with the young person and contacted the professional network to establish a personalised plan. Community link workers whilst DSN advocates and supports with transition plan back to the community.

10 Since Referral:
- Property secured and located with the support of the commissioner in meetings.
- Children in Care team involved and available to support with training.
- Leroy starting to visit the property and plans in place for reintegration into the community.

Areas for development

- The lived experience of 106 parents and caregivers tells us in the 2023/24 survey that they are very concerned about the wait times for ADHD and Autism Assessment and wheelchair assessments and repairs; that communication and coproduction with schools needs to improve in some circumstances; that integration with children's social care planning (for children with EHCPs) and learning from complaints needs further development and that transition to adulthood would benefit from targeted development work. This feedback has been listened to with care and has directly informed Reading's SEND Strategic Risk and Gaps Analysis, and the revised workplans of the SEND workstreams.

- Berkshire Healthcare Trust analysis of CAMHS waiting times depicts the following picture:

Waiting Times

Reducing waiting times is a Driver Metric for the service.
We are working to implement a 'no wrong door approach across all of our CAMH services and to ensure that our waiting times across all services are compliant with the current NHSE definitions of 'clock-stop' activity.
The data shown is for all referrals for Reading children and young people to all CAMH services.
Metrics are those currently monitored by NHSE for all CAMH services.
There are currently no national mandated targets for generic CAMHS waiting times however it is likely that a target of 4 weeks will be implemented in 2024/5.
BHFT CAMHS are showing an improvement trajectory for all metrics apart from 90 th percentile waits which increased over Q1 but are now decreasing.
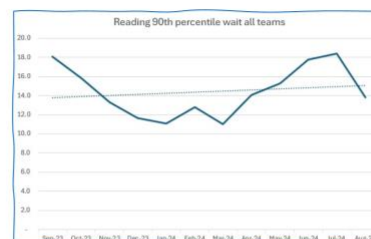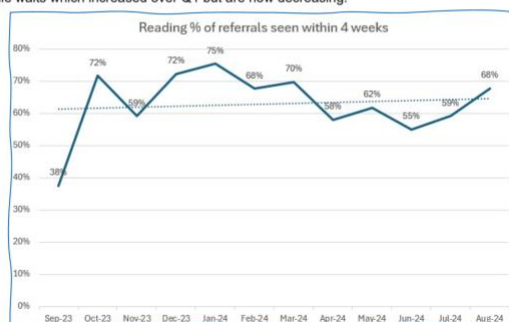
- As in line with the national picture the current waiting times for our children and young people in Reading awaiting an Autism and ADHD assessment remain:

Quarter 1 data for 2024-2025

	0-29wks (0-6 m)	30-55wks (07-12m)	56-82wks (13-18m)	83-104wks (19-24 m)	105+wks (2y+)	TOTAL
ADHD Reading	278	218	223	91	109	**919**
AAT 0-5 years Reading	58	93	77	47	21	**296**
AAT 5-18 years Reading	152	204	223	129	37	**745**

- There is still too much emphasis on EHCPs as a means of accessing support, the partnership system is often reliant on statutory assessment, rather than being needs led.

- Access to some support services has been reduced by increase in demand

- Annual Reviews of EHCPs are taking too long to process due to significantly increased workload in the SEND Team

- Children sometimes wait too long for special school places due to increasing demand and continued shortage of local provision – places remain insufficient to meet the needs of all children

- Children who are Emotionally Based School Avoiders do not always receive timely support

- Recent changes now ensure that the wider systems school effectiveness development work is informed by the experience of YJS children with SEND

- Transition from early years settings to primary and from primary to secondary do not always work well which can result in children not being properly supported in their new setting.

- There are insufficient special education places and provision to respond to the level of need in Reading.

- Transition from children's social care to adult's social care for children with complex needs and disabilities is not always smooth or timely

- Some parents and staff in schools lack awareness about what is available which can impact on timely support

- Placements in non maintained and independent schools continue to rise

- Data and intelligence on the use of short breaks and respite is currently manually gathered, which impacts on the capacity of the system to think strategically, commission and plan ahead

- There is not yet a clearly defined ICB, RBC and BFfC Commissioning Strategy that clearly integrates and prioritises the needs of SEND children in the short to medium term

- There is as yet little data on the impact of newly commissioned health services

- Wait times for autism and ADHD are still too long and access to therapies is not timely for children in schools who don't have EHCPs. Berkshire Healthcare have an advice line for children under the age of 5 years and there is currently no wait for access to this.

What we are doing

- Funding streams which can be accessed without EHCP have increased, as evidenced in early years and access to funding for children without EHCPs is being planned for 2024-25 through DBV initiatives.

- Strategic discussion with BFfC and ICB senior leaders are underway to plan for a move to a more needs led system, that prioritises early intervention and prevention.

- A new 42 place secondary provision was opened in Wokingham in 2022, in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council.

- YJS (Youth Justice) have been offered a regular place around the table for the termly School Effectiveness

- Integrated strategic commissioning would make a significant difference to the lived experience of SEND children and families, and be supportive to a smoother transition to adulthood, discussions have started between BFfC, RBC and the ICB to explore the next steps

- Options for a new 180 place MLD /SLD provision are being explored through rationalisation of primary school places for 2026

- Expanded places at local special schools are planned over the next three years through the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-2027

- Expanded autism support within the community, whilst children are waiting for specialist assessment, is demonstrating some early signs of benefit to some parents and carers, this needs to be review and evaluated, and further embedded.

Feedback from a Parent/Carer receiving help from Autism Berkshire

"It was a great help to have our own experiences acknowledged but also it was very thought provoking and reassuring at the same time. I would encourage anyone to undertake the workshop because even if you only learn one new thing or recognise one new instance that you can connect with, that in itself would make it worthwhile both for the child/adult and for the parents/carer."

"I have gained so much support by being part of this group from sharing my worries and concerns about my children, to learning and being educated by the organisers and other mums' experiences. There is so much value in hearing another mum's advice, being further on the journey than you are has been invaluable."

(Parent feedback)

Children achieve positive outcomes

Strengths

- Reading has developed – and is further enhancing – a comprehensive and high-quality educational offer for children with SEND. The impact of this offer on outcomes for children with SEND can be seen in the educational attainment of children with SEND.

- The EYFS (Early Years) attainment of children with SEND is a particular strength in Reading and demonstrates impact of the whole system support and advice offer to early years providers for children with SEND.

- Reading schools, settings and education partners continue to achieve strong outcomes for many of our SEND children, young people, and staff.

- Strong inclusive practice is a feature in the majority of nursery, primary and Special schools and is increasingly a feature of secondary provision. This is evidenced in outcomes and monitoring visits to locally maintained schools and curriculum and behaviour judgements from Ofsted inspections.

- With most Reading schools judged good or outstanding and in findings from school/setting assurance activities, there is clear evidence that schools/settings in Reading offer strong provision for our young people with SEND and are

increasingly effectively implementing research informed approaches to improve standards.

- There is a powerful sense of community and support, and stakeholder engagement shows the extent and depth of system wide commitment to shared values in terms of inclusion, care for each other and educational excellence. This has been shown through school engagement in the SEND Strategy, Education Partnership Board and SENCO networks. This year's SENCO conference in neurodiversity was attended by the majority of schools.

- The Family Help (early help system) achieves excellent impact on outcomes for Reading's children, as reflected in the most recent Ofsted ILACS inspection of Reading's children's services. The ILACs noted, '*BFfC delivers a range of impressive and impactful Family Help services that are reducing children's needs for statutory intervention'*.

- Evidence of the impact of Family Help interventions has been sourced through case examples provided by Family Help staff. For example, a recent intervention offered by Family Help focused on supporting parents of a child with SEND around access to appropriate, safe housing and offering targeted self-esteem support to the children whilst also ensuring their parents emotional wellbeing was supported. The key issue for the family was their accommodation, which was unsafe for their child with additional needs. Working closing with the Occupational Therapist, Family Help we were able to evidence the family's needs which led to them being re-assessed against the housing criteria; this ultimately led to the family being moved from Band 4 to Band 1, likely decreasing the waiting time to access appropriate housing. Alongside this there is evidence that interventions offered by Family Help result in lasting change. Over the last year the rate of re-allocations where families have required previous Family Help intervention within the last six months has never risen above 6%.

- Many parents and young people value the work of schools, settings and other stakeholders and there is strong political support for the work of educationalists and our education institutions. This is evident in evidence from our school effectiveness visits, from Ofsted parent view feedback and in engagement with parent carer forums.

How do we know we are making a difference: a multi-agency village raising every child

Multi-agency working and the additional community offer provided by many Reading schools and education establishments is a real strength and our schools/settings have been the first point of contact and lifeline for many families and young people through the cost-of-living crisis. This has particularly benefited children with SEND, many of whom have multiple educational vulnerabilities beyond national averages for the group. For example, 2022/23 data from the DfE shows that whilst the number of Reading children on SEND

Support who are also classed as economically 'disadvantaged' is roughly in line with national figures at 40.4%, the number of Reading children on SEND support who are of a global majority background stands at 39.7% (10.8% higher than the national figure) and who have English as an additional language stands at 21.8% (6.5% higher than the national average). However, the number of children who have an EHCP and who have EAL is 37%, which closely aligns with Reading's overall figure of 36%. The pie chart below depict the percentage of Reading children with an EHCP who also have EAL vs. those with an EHCP for whom English is not an additional language.
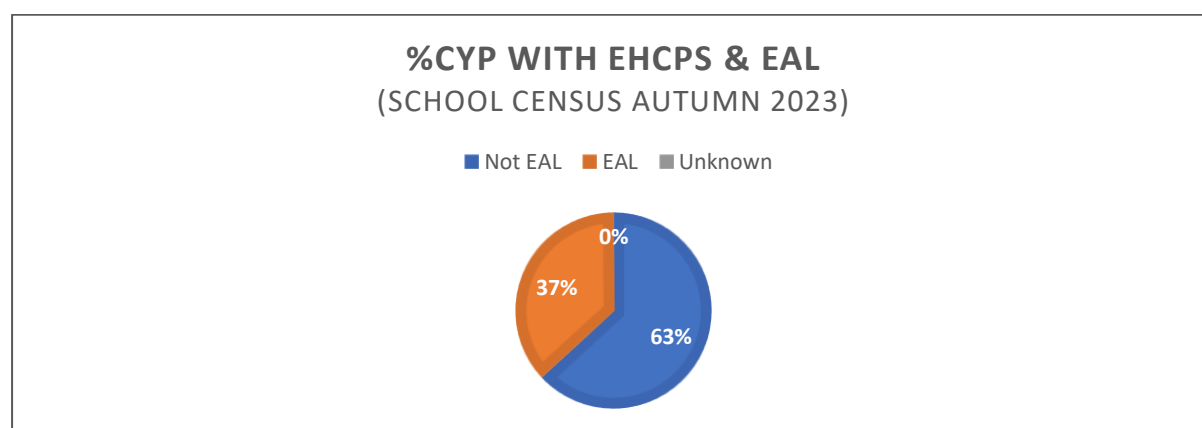
The percentage of Reading children with an EHCP who also have EAL vs. those with an EHCP for whom English is not an additional language

- Outcomes for children who need SEND Support in primary are strong, compared to national benchmarks for the group, reflecting the impact of the work undertaken to improve SEND support in early years. Figures 11 and 12, below, depict the outcomes in terms of 'Good Level of Development' and 'Early Learning Goals' for Reading children with an EHCP and on SEND Support, respectively, as compared with South East and national figures. It can be seen that Reading is performing well in this area.
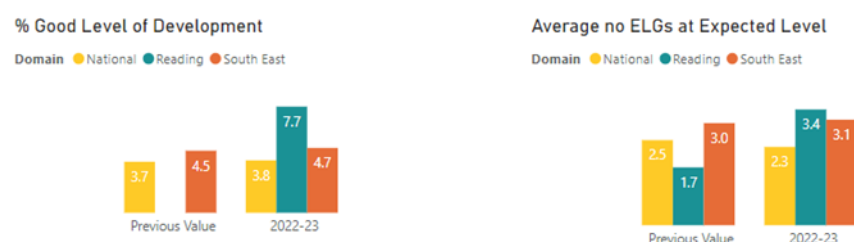
Figure 11: A bar graph depicting the outcomes in terms of 'Good Level of Development' and 'Early Learning Goals' for Reading children in Reception with an EHCP as compared with South East and national figures

% Good Level of Development

Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East

Average no ELGs at Expected Level

Domain ● National ● Reading ● South East
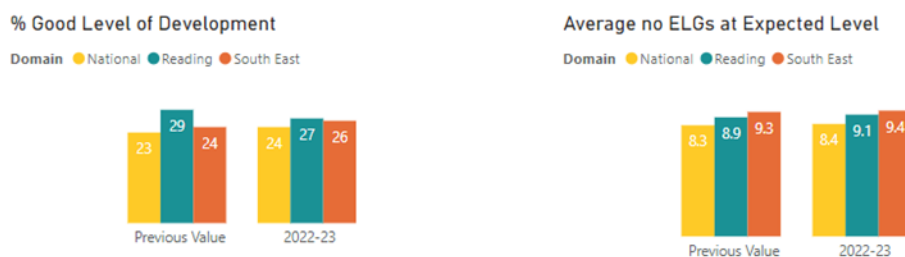
Figure 12: A bar graph depicting the outcomes in terms of 'Good Level of Development' and 'Early Learning Goals' for Reading children in Reception on SEND Support as compared with South East and national figures

- Reading primary schools understand the importance of securing early reading skills for all children and systematic phonics is provided for all children with SEND. The school effectiveness team provide support and guidance for schools including phonics training, intervention training and curriculum reviews. Many schools buy in to LA and RWINC training and support. Pedagogy in phonics is a strength in primary schools as evidenced in school effectiveness visit reports and Ofsted inspections. Outcomes at the end of KS1 for EHCP children are above national and South East averages, as are the proportions of children requiring SEND support that achieve the standard in phonics at the end of year two.

- Reading was above national, regional and statistical neighbours in attainment of RWM at the expected standard for children with SEND support and the rate of improvement in Reading was above the national rate of improvement. However, EHCP attainment was well below national attainment for the group with attendance being identified as a potential issue that may have impacted the progress made by some children. This issue is being further explored.

- At KS2, SEND children make progress in reading and writing that is just below the national average, and above average in Maths (this disparity in progress may partially reflect the relatively higher numbers of neurodivergent children educated in Reading schools in comparison with national averages, a population that can have maths as a particular area of strength). Improvements in progress for this group are well above national improvement rates in all measures.

Areas for development

- Though SEND support outcomes are broadly consistent with the national average, writing is a weaker element in outcomes for all children at KS1. Support has been provided to schools in line with Education Endowment Fund (EEF) and DfE guidance on improving writing with a focus on ensuring that core components of phonics, transcription, vocabulary and grammar are retained in long term memory. We have identified that some children repeat mistakes that are not identified in assessment and more network training will be provided in 24-25 to address this issue.

- Outcomes for children with SEND are less convincing at the end of KS4 and both school effectiveness visits, Ofsted inspections and parental feedback highlights that more work to embed and support inclusive practice in the secondary phase will benefit children. The Education Partnership Board (inclusive of all schools and governance types) have agreed a vision that makes commitment to collective action in this area.

- Some children with SEND support attain well on average at KS4, though there is too much variability between schools, (with children with multiple vulnerabilities performing poorly in comparison with national benchmarks). Children with EHCPs do not make enough progress or attain well against national benchmarks. In the past the Local authority has had less influence in the secondary sector (as all but one secondary school are part of a MAT). However, the development of RISE has allowed for closer working and has led to an increase in uptake of training relating to the ordinarily available offer. In addition, the Education Partnership Board has identified SEND as an issue and an area for strategic action. Progress and attainment for children with SEND in mainstream schools is better that average progress in the special and alternative sector.

Absence data for children with SEND

- In May 2024, the attendance figures for children on SEND support were 89.7% and 83.80% for children with an EHCP. This compares to an average attendance figure of 93.8% for children without SEND in Reading schools. Whilst the lower attendance of children with SEND as compared to those without reflects national trends, the disparity between these figures remains of concern and is an area being explored by the education, access and support teams.

- The numbers of children registered as EHE in Reading was 331, of whom 46 (13.9%) were on SEND Support and 15 (4.5%) had an EHCP. 331 children on EHE represents 1.4% of Reading's school age population.

Suspensions and Exclusions

- Reading's current overall suspension rate for children aged 5-16 stands at 2.2% for primary, 14.7% for secondary and 35% for special. These figures represent a decrease in overall suspensions at primary level and in special schools as compared with the 2022/23 academic year (which were 3.1% and 38.2% respectively), but an increase in overall suspensions at secondary as compared with the 2022/23 academic year (13.2%). National comparators for this academic year are not currently available.[2]

- In Reading this year there have been 16 permanent exclusions (an exclusion rate of 0.06%). Of these, none were in primary and only one was for a child with an EHCP (and they were excluded from a special school). Of the remainder, 6 were on SEND support. This means that 44% of children permanently excluded in Reading this
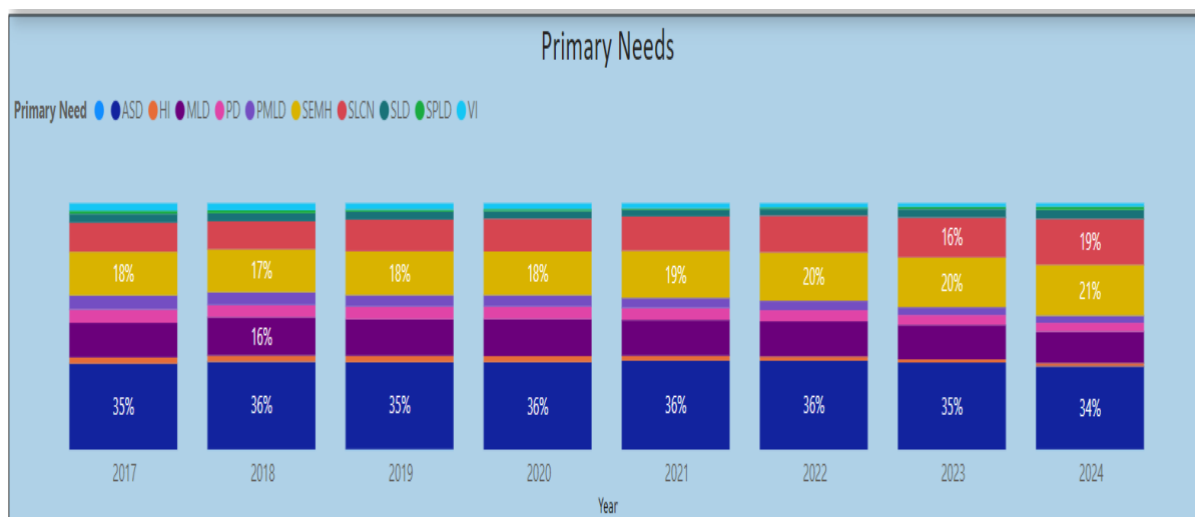
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[2] The most recent national dataset is for the 22/23 autumn term and it is felt this may not present a helpful comparison given the pace at which the exclusions/suspensions landscape is changing.

academic year were identified as having SEND (6.25% had an EHCP, 37.5% were on SEND support).

Suspension rates by SEND category and geographical location in Reading schools (primary, secondary and special) for children aged 5-16 is the 23/24 academic year to date

Area	Total number of suspensions	Number of suspensions for a child with an EHCP	% of suspensions for children with an EHCP	Number of suspensions for a child on SEND Support	% of suspensions for children on SEND support
South	895	55	6.14%	375	42%
North	214	34	16%	120	56%
East	337	132	39.1%	101	30%
West	520	85	16.3%	205	39%
Total	1966	306	-	801	-

- Reading schools are suspending and permanently excluding children with SEND (both with an EHCP or on SEND support) at a disproportionate rate as compared children without SEND. For example, whilst only 17.9% of children in Reading schools are identified as having SEND, they account for 44% of all permanent exclusions and 56% of suspensions across the school estate.

- When data is further explored to understand the possible factors contributing to the disproportionate rates of exclusion and suspension of children with SEND, two key factors stand out: Firstly, there are significant variations in the rates at which children with different types of SEND are excluded. Secondly, there exists inconsistency between Reading schools both in terms of their overall rates of exclusion and suspension and regarding the rate at which they do/do not exclude and or suspend children with SEND.

- Children whose primary need is SEMH account for 61% of the suspensions of children with SEND. 21% are children with autism and 12% from children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). This shows that 94% of suspensions for children with SEND come from three key areas of need: SEMH, ASC and SLCN. This finding is noteworthy, given that the rates at which children with these areas of need are suspended do not consistently correlate with the rate at which these areas of need are identified within Reading's school population.

Primary Needs

Primary Need ● ● ASD ● HI ● MLD ● PD ● PMLD ● SEMH ● SLCN ● SLD ● SPLD ● VI

(Stacked bar chart showing percentages by year 2017–2024)

- 2017: 18%, 35%
- 2018: 17%, 16%, 36%
- 2019: 18%, 35%
- 2020: 18%, 36%
- 2021: 19%, 36%
- 2022: 20%, 36%
- 2023: 16%, 20%, 35%
- 2024: 19%, 21%, 34%

Year

Rates of SEND by area of need in Reading primary and secondary schools, 2017-2024

- Though children with SEMH account for only 21% of Reading's SEND population, they account for 61% of suspensions for children with SEND and are thus overrepresented. Conversely, though children with autism account for 35% of children with SEND, they only account for 21% of suspensions of children with SEND and are thus underrepresented. Children with SLCN as their primary area of need account for 15% of children with SEND in Reading, and 12% of suspensions of children with SEND – roughly consistent.

- While rates of suspension of children with SEND remain concerning for children in Reading, given the significant overrepresentation of children with SEMH needs in this category, work is being targeted to focus on this highly vulnerable group.

What are we doing?

- Research informed practice principles- Locally agreed approaches to school improvement. The following evidence-informed approaches have been in place over the last 4 years to support curriculum excellence, inclusive practice, and school improvement. Where these have been implemented effectively, they have had significant impact on outcomes locally, nationally, and internationally. Work continues to ensure these approaches are embedded in a sustainable way:

  - High expectation low threat approaches to relationship management and mental health (Therapeutic thinking schools),

  - Mastery approaches to curriculum design (curriculum training),

  - Evidence informed pedagogy (principles of instruction and instructional coaching),

  - Good autism practice (Autism education Trust GAP, SERTS and Intensive interaction)

  - Anti Racist schools (racial literacy training)

- Redesigning the Behaviour Support Service and integrating it with RISE, the CME, school effectiveness and EP teams to address poor attendance and suspensions:
  - Using the RISE team to increase take up and high-fidelity implementation of a trauma informed approach (TTS) in all Reading schools,
  - Using the RISE team to increase take up and high-fidelity implementation of an autism growth approach (AET) in all Reading schools,
  - Using the RISE team to increase take up and high-fidelity implementation of a whole school approach to SLCN (ELKLAN) from September 2024,
  - Creating a knowledge transfer partnership with the University of Reading and BHFT to place a SALT trainee in every Reading primary school for a 20-week placement from September 2024.
- The ICB is developing a data dashboard which will capture health outcomes for children.

Children in Reading with SEND are well prepared for their next steps

Strengths

- SEND children who stay in education post-16 achieve well, and above the national average. Reading is in quartile A and B for outcome measures at level 3 and 2 by age 19 for SEND support and EHCP cohorts. If children with SEND start courses, they are likely to be attending in March beyond national averages suggesting that both adaptation and pastoral support post 16 is strong.

- "Ready, Steady, Go" transition programme is used by Royal Berks Hospital to support transition to adult health services. Information about adult health services is given from the age of 16 years

- BOB ICB have worked with young people to develop a series of videos about their experiences of transition. These are now being used as a training resource

- The RBH provides a transitions clinic for children and young people with neuro-disability from the age of 14 years

- From Year 9 all children with EHC Plans will have Preparation for Adulthood Outcomes routinely in their EHC Plans and this will include an evaluation of their ability to travel independently to college and/or work post 16

- The personalised care and quality of support available for Pinecroft and Cressingham is rated 'Good' by Ofsted and helps prepare our children for adulthood:

- Ofsted feedback on Pinecroft, March 2024:

- "Children benefit from nurturing care from the caring staff. Staff are patient in their approach and take time to get to know the children. They recognise the importance of children being supported to have a voice and are proactive in seeking the children's feelings and views. Staff meet the children's needs well in all areas of their lives. To achieve this, staff work closely with network professionals and children's

families from the outset. This helps staff to have a well-rounded understanding of children's particular needs and how best to meet them. Children are encouraged to be themselves in an inclusive environment, where differences in people are respected."

- Ofsted feedback on Cressingham, July 2024:

- "Children are happy and content when they visit the home because staff have developed positive relationships with them and their families. Staff have a good understanding of children's needs and are responsive to any changes in behaviour. They have respectful interactions with children and support them to make choices using their preferred method of communication. Children are supported to make good progress. Managers and staff have established strong working relationships with parents and external professionals, who speak positively about the care children receive."

Areas for development

- Reading Family Forum and partners led a patient engagement event on 6 June 2024 for parents / carers of young people with SEND to get feedback on their experiences. Workshops included neurodiversity, early support for mental health, therapies and transitions.

- The quality and smoothness of transition from children's social care to adult social care is subject to review and development; this includes a revised and focussed SEND strategic workplan for the working group with oversight of this area and a focused thematic audit on the transition of CYPDT children to adulthood.

- In addition, developing an integrated commissioning strategic approach to commissioning will be of great benefit to the readiness of the system to receive children who need ongoing support into adulthood.

Children with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

Strengths

- A comprehensive Local Offer website, newsletter, further information on the BFfC website and use of social media accounts provide families with information about available activities.

- Reading Family Information Service (FIS) has been recognised with national awards in 2021 and 2023 for the quality of support offered, and the way that the Family Information Service promotes the participation of parents and carers and children and young people.

- The SEND Local Offer (LO), which is co-produced in collaboration with Reading Families Forum, other parents through the SEND Local Offer network and through Special United.

Involving children and their families has increased awareness and usage of the Local Offer.

- In response to feedback from families, a simplified 'Roadmap' of the SEND offer has been co-designed with families. An intentionally EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) humble approach has been taken to reach out to families of diverse heritage and identity in the co-design of these materials.

  - Co-production with young people is also really important in Reading, this has including working in partnership with Special United to help improve information and access to local services, as well as blogs from every event. This contract has just been re-let to Me2, with an emphasis on gaining the voice of the child. The current membership of the group includes 50% of children and young people with global majority heritage.

- A range of specialist short breaks is available including after school and holiday clubs, weekend activities, youth clubs

- Support is also available from local short breaks providers for children to attend mainstream activities in the community

- Local cultural offer including Reading Rep Theatre, Rabble Theatre, South Street Arts Centre and museum partners, and local cinemas provide inclusive sessions for children with SEND. There is also a Theatre Company run by and for young people with neurodiversity called The Make Sense Theatre Company.

- Tier 4 social prescribers link young people back into the community following discharge from a Tier 4 inpatient hospital as part of the discharge plan.

Areas for development

- There is a shortage of short breaks provision for children with more complex needs

- There is a shortage of short breaks provision for young people over 16

- Work continues to embed an EDI humility and embed good allyship and antiracist practice in the wider children's systems in Reading, building on a strong foundation of change and a value-led systems leadership in Reading

What we are doing?

- We are working with local short breaks providers to support & encourage development of short breaks provision in areas where there are gaps

- Continuing the implementation of EDI humble, culturally curious, antiracist practice in Reading

Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

Strengths

- The support to the early years and education system has focused on setting high ambition for the achievement of SEND children in education. The strong performance of SEND children in the early years and the strong academic performance of children looked after who also have SEND are two key examples of the impact of this approach.

- The quality and personalised care of provision in Pinecroft and Cressingham, has been rated Good by Ofsted and reflects the social care ambition for children with SEND to receive good quality care and support.

- Systems leaders have worked closely together in Reading for many years to jointly commit to shared priorities for SEND Strategic development and an ambition for SEND children, co-designed with families, that supports SEND children to achieve their potential. This is further reflected in ICB governance structures and priorities, and in the Berkshire West Unified Executive agreeing that SEND will be one of the top five priorities for development at Place (Reading).

- The multi-agency SEND Strategy Steering Group provides governance of the SEND Strategy and activity and performance measures are reported to the Council's Executive on a quarterly basis, providing Executive support, challenge and rigorous oversight of SEND progress and development, with a focus on the impact on outcomes for children and families.

- A monthly SEND data dashboard is used by SEND Managers in the Council to monitor performance

- The Designated Clinical Officer for SEND in the ICB reports quarterly on SEND performance to the ICB and the Local Authority

- There is evidence of SEND briefings of the most senior systems leaders (at Chief Executive level), engaging the most senior leaders in supporting better outcomes for children with SEND.

Areas for development

(includes what we are doing)

Following review of the progress made with the initial strategic ambition of the SEND Strategy in summer 2024, the focus of the workstreams is being strategically refocussed. The refocus concentrates on the strategic change that is responsive to analysis of strategic strengths, risks and gaps, to make best use of partnership support to improve outcomes for children with SEND.

- The SEND Strategy Group membership and focus will similarly benefit from review and development, in response to this strategic analysis.

- Following DBV investment, close attention is being given to the input and value of this investment and the difference it is making to outcomes for children and families with SEND. This has included the specific investment in a data analyst post, to improve the granular understanding of data.

- There are particularly challenges with providing equipment to children with complex physical needs, this is on the ICB risk register.

- A SEND dashboard is under development by BOB ICB to respond to some of the ongoing challenges with receiving timely health economy data, which is sufficiently focussed on impact on outcomes.

Leaders actively engage with children and young people and their families

Strengths

- Strategy and key developments have been fully coproduced with families and this has been extended to partnership coproduction with a wide range of SEND families to co-design a simple two page summary of the SEND offer, in response to a direct request from SEND parents and carers, and the co-design of the Local Offer and Ordinarily Available Provision.

- Reading Family Forum communicates with 1792 families with SEND children in Reading and is a crucial conduit to local families. The voices and experiences of these families are then represented on the SEND Strategic Group and parents/carers are actively involved in co-design.

- Through the work of the RISE team, EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) humble community outreach to a wide group of small community groups who have SEND children has also been undertaken. The approach has enabled conversations to be undertaken in a range of different languages, with different communities with diverse identities, heritage, culture and faith contexts, to strengthen the capacity of the SEND systems leaders to listen to minoritised lived experience and actively consider intersectionality.

- Parent Carer Forum involvement in 2022-27 SEND Strategy and subsequent improvement work has been consistently strong and due to multiple pressures on parents and carers time, a focus on using time to best effect in the SEND Strategy Group has been agreed from 2024.

- Parent / carers are very active in the current RBH Transitions Project

- Young people from Reading Borough Council with a learning disability took in part co-produced videos around the key challenges of moving to adult services.

- The SEND Joint Implementation Group (West Berks, Reading & Wokingham LAs, ICB, Health provider trusts and PCF from each area) gives parents a strong voice in local SEND developments and the chance to provide robust challenge to leaders

- The Royal Berkshire Hospital has an embedded children engagement strategy

- The RBH has coproduced its new website with children and young people and is developing a virtual tour of the hospital with children and young people Areas for development

- BHFT has a Participation lead for the Children's directorate who ensures that coproduction is at the heart of all service developments. The Trust uses information gathered from its service user feedback system (I Want Great care) to inform service changes and developments as well as via direct engagement with children and families.

- The SEND Youth Forum Special United sessions are popular with young people and enable young people's lived experience to be heard, shared and responded to. The regular blogs from every event enable young people to keep in touch with the latest news and developments.

- Two cohorts of supported interns have presented to the Reading Employment Forum since 2023 stating what they enjoy about being a supported intern, what they have gained from the programme and what they want to do going forward.

Areas for development

(includes what we are doing)

- Reading's DCO and Reading Family Forum, the support of partners, led a patient engagement event on 6th June 2024 for parents / carers of young people with SEND to get feedback on their experiences. Workshops included neurodiversity, early support for mental health, therapies and transitions

- There are plans in place to include members of the SEND Youth Forum on the Royal Berkshire Hospital Membership Board

- The children and young people with disabilities team (CYPDT) hold data on the of number of children supported by and open to CYPDT, Short Breaks and OT services. To enable children to share their views with staff, staff are trained in using Makaton and PECS to undertake direct work with children and young people to seek their views. Children open to the service are visited at home and at school as part of statutory requirements and their plans (child in need/Child protection/CLA plans) are reviewed according to statutory requirements. Children and young people are able to have experiences they would not usually have with the support of a Personal Assistant provided by BFfC, or through accessing one of BFfC's two children's homes, Cressingham (that provides respite) and Pinecroft (that provides shared care).

- EDI sensitive and humble parent, carer and young person dialogue is a priority for Reading and will continue to progress and grow.

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND

Strengths

- Partnership leaders across Reading met together with South East Sector Led Improvement partners for a day to focus exclusively on SEND. This facilitated courageous conversation has helped refresh the partnership strategy to focus on the most impactful actions for the final three years of the strategy, including reviewing detailed data on incidence of SEND, trends and outcomes for children.

- An analysis of the strategic strengths, needs, risks and gaps within the Reading SEND system has informed a partnership refocussing of activity in the SEND workstreams and a renewed focus on the system working together to review the impact on outcomes for children, young people and families with SEND.

- Specific SEND related discussions and briefings with Executive leaders are managed within the partnership to ensure the most senior leaders have an accurate and shared understanding of the SEND needs of children and young people and the current pressures and achievements in the system. This includes for example, briefings for the Chief Executive of BOB ICB, focused strategic discussions with Brighter Futures for Children's (BFfC's) Senior Leadership Team and regular reporting to BFfC Board.

- Multi agency SEND Strategy workstream groups are well attended by a wide range of stakeholders and inform leaders on changing and emerging needs

- Health economy leaders within the ICB have worked together to gather and regularly report information quarterly monitoring the needs of the population.

Areas for development

- SEND content of JSNA could be expanded to ensure joint planning long term to meet the needs of children with SEND

- An integrated strategic Commissioning approach (0-25) spanning BFfC, RBC and BOB ICB is required to further develop and integrate the partnership provision for Reading's SEND children and young people; and prepare for adulthood for those children whose level of need will require lifetime care and support.

What we are doing?

- The SEND content of JSNA will be reviewed and revised SEND content agreed

- An executive leadership dialogue (spanning BFfC, RBC and ICB) about the shared commissioning intention and options for closer strategic alignment is under way

- The DBV Programme will provide resource for increased data capacity and analysis

- Briefings of the ICB CEO and dedicated SEND transformation discussions with BFfC Senior Leadership Team and Board, enable an integration of SEND systems development in wider systems transformation and medium-term strategic planning.

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND

Strengths

- New services are developed in partnership with children / young people and parents and in response to areas of identified need. For example, the significant increase in ARP provision in partnership with Reading schools; the design and development of the new Learning Disability CAMHS Service; and the recently introduced Key Worker service for young people at risk of Tier 4 admission; are all examples of how the whole system has responded to identified needs and gaps.

- BOB ICB is taking a needs-led approach to service design and delivery. This has led to investment in a 24 hour mental health crisis service; an Epilepsy Transition Nurse role; a specialist eating disorders service for young people with autism; a helpline for neurodiverse children and the new Health Reasonable Adjustments passports.

- There has been significant work undertaken to support commissioning colleagues to understand the needs of SEND children and young people from the age of 14, to inform service design and commissioning in advance of transition to adulthood, and ensure personalised Care Act assessments are undertaken with families.

- There has been excellent and agile strategic thinking in BOB ICB, which has enabled an innovative commissioning of MHST (Mental Health Support Team) delivery overseen by Local Authorities, to ensure strong integration with schools and the wider early help suite of services that BFfC and RBC oversee.

- Some examples of joint commissioning and design of services spanning the ICB and LA functions are evident in Reading, including the Children & Young People's Integrated Therapy Service and Children in Care Service (commissioned by the three Local Authorities in Berkshire West)

- BOB ICB have commissioned a pilot CAMHS Mental health early support service based in one of the Reading GP practices. The Practitioners offer very timely help, advice and self-help sessions to children and young people under 18 who have worries about their emotional or mental health. Early data is positive in terms of the impact of the service and shows that a significant number of the young people using this service have neurodivergent profiles. The Practitioners have been able to support them to access appropriate services.

- The Royal Berkshire Hospital held a patient engagement event for young people with epilepsy and neurodiversity to gather families' views. As a result, peer to peer support for parents was set up.

- In response to the investment of DBV funding, careful consideration has been given to the most effective use of the resource in response to children and young people's need and the strategic priorities for SEND development.

Areas for development

- Commissioning arrangements for Alternative Provision is in the process of ongoing development, formalisation and quality assurance

- Discussions with ICB colleagues will ensure health economy oversight of alternative provision

- There is a need for an integrated commissioning framework for SEND children spanning BOB ICB, RBC and BFfC, the first priorities for this framework would be:

- Ensuring individual young people requiring transition to adult services are considered early (from age 14) and actively, and effectively, planned for together by education, health and social care providers, to ensure clear partnership planning and investment, with families, in preparation for adulthood (in close partnership with Work stream 5).

- Ensuring sufficiency of Special Educational provision (for more complex children) from Early Years to KS4, based on existing forecasting (in close partnership with Work stream 2).

- Taking a transformational approach to the service design and commissioning of a renewed needs-led whole system approach to SEND (moving away from a medical model), to be more responsive to the needs of children and families and improve the accessibility and effectiveness of timely support (in close partnership with Work stream 3).

- Ensuring the effectiveness and delivery of Integrated Therapies, and specifically commissioned services, in reaching the children that need support in a timely and effective way (with demonstrable impact on outcomes for children).

- Co-design of Supported Living and Respite provisions, based on the analysis of need, and in close partnership with families and children's leads.

- Dedicated resource to support employment pathways into adulthood for young people with SEND, building on the learning from supported internships.

What we are doing / next steps

- Work is under way in the ICB involving senior managers and safeguarding leads to ensure that the commissioning of health services includes children in alternative provision

- Executive discussions on the development of a more integrated commissioning system are under way, to progress the identified development areas

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

Strengths

- The regular reporting of SEND system effectiveness and impact on outcomes for children and young people, and their families, informs a 'learning system' approach that enables service effectiveness to be reviewed and evaluated.

- In response to leaning and listening to families, further improve the service provided to children with send and their parents/carers, the SEND team has been re-structured: from a primary/secondary/post-16 team to a age 0-Year 8, Year – age 25 and a 20 week team. Dividing SEND teams in this way has been found to support improved Preparation for Adult (PfA) outcomes as well as a more supportive transition experience between key stages which is a key area of improvement for Reading.

- Extensive work has been undertaken in the CYPDT services to review each child's plan and provision, individually, and adjust care planning and service provision accordingly.

- Feedback from quarterly reports is used to inform future service planning. For example, the biggest single reason for referral is consistently SEMH needs, and many of these children are neurodivergent. This information informed the decision to invest in SCERTS training for the EPS/RISE/MHST teams.

- Thematic lines of enquiry are identified by SEND systems leaders and explored collaboratively as a whole system to identify how, as a system, changes need to be made. For example the analysis of children and young people with SEND who have been suspended from school, is directly informing the design and focus of the new Behaviour Support provision in Reading and the focus of the RISE service, as well as informing the Director of Education's support and challenge conversation with school strategic leaders.

- Contract monitoring includes monitoring of children's outcomes, e.g., Children & Young People's Integrated Therapy contract and has been used effectively to emphasise the importance of all services understanding their impact on outcomes for children (rather than measuring outputs).

- Services have been commissioned on the basis of learning from pilots which have demonstrated impact on outcomes, e.g., Therapeutic Thinking Team, EBSA Team, Autism Higher Level Teaching Assistants. New groups support for children and families with SEND has also followed these areas of learning, for example a specific course for children awaiting neuro diverse assessment who were struggling to eat:

"This course has been a life-changer for my son. He's now eating things he wouldn't have six months ago and I also have more knowledge to guide him and understand it all. Would highly recommend to all."

(Parent who took part in first intensive Food Refusal course)

- Quarterly reporting to the BOB SEND Board and an established Berkshire West Partnership Service Leads Meeting between providers and the DCO enables service improvement is discussed in the health economy.

- Multi agency EHCP audits involving the three Berkshire West Local Authorities, ICB, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, Royal Berkshire Hospital Trust and Parent Carer Forums demonstrate good practice in many of Reading's EHCPs

- All training delivered is evaluated. Participants (e.g. school staff and parents) are invited to give feedback. This feedback is used when planning future training and there are excellent examples in the Early Years team of an iterative and intelligent response to feedback from Early Years leaders to iteratively inform the shared training and priority areas of focus for the development programme for early years leaders. 40% of early years group settings and childminders have identified SEND training as a priority, the training offer has been expanded in response and focuses on inclusive universal learning and supporting children with SEN in small steps to learning.

- Longer-term impact questionnaires are being implemented (a term after attending a training session) which asks them to feedback on the impact it has had on their practice. The training offer is revised annually to ensure that what is offered meets demand.

- There has been close liaison and collaborative working across services to ensure a cohesive and integrated training offer across SEND services.

- Mental Heath Surgeries (delivered jointly with the Primary Mental Health Team) use pre and post rating scales as part of the consultation process so school staff can give immediate feedback to professionals. Data is also held on which schools access this service so that coordinated support can be used to encourage uptake from schools who have not participated in training and support.

How do we know we are making a difference: RISE

The RISE team is an entirely new service (started January 2024 and currently funded by a DfE DBV grant until March 2025) that supports Reading schools. Its aim is to upskill Reading schools so that all Reading children, regardless of their level of need and which school they attend, can access the amazing opportunities presented to them at their local school.

Reading children said that they wanted to attend their local schools – they wanted to go to school with their siblings, with their neighbours and stay close to home. The aim of RISE is to

upskill schools so that all Reading schools are able to support as many children as possible to achieve this wish.

The RISE Service includes SEND specialists and consultants, with experience and knowledge of the different areas of need (e.g., mental health, neurodiversity, behaviour, speech, language and communication needs and sensory needs). RISE supports schools through a free, comprehensive yet bespoke training programme, the modelling of best practice and support to develop school systems that promote early intervention and a strong graduated response when children are needing that extra bit of help and support.

RISE also works to strengthen local school networks, to ensure that good practice can be shared and schools can work together to share knowledge and expertise.

Though early in its implementation, initial feedback from schools on the RISE project has been very positive:

Feedback from Headteacher on RISE team:

"I would just like to give you all feedback on the RISE team. I have had the pleasure of having the RISE teams in both of my school. Their support has been invaluable and every member of the team has been highly professional and incredibly helpful to my SEND team. We are thrilled with the support we have received and would really like to be able to thank you all for making this happen. We feel incredibly lucky to benefit from this support and would like you to pass on our thanks to the team. Every interaction we have had has led to improved outcomes for our young people and my staff have really praised the professional development that they have received."

Feedback from SENCo on RISE team:

"I just wanted to congratulate you on your RISE project. So far, the advice and support we have received has been amazing! We've received swift replies, the research that has gone into the core of the advice is thorough, totally on point and has been greatly appreciated. The consultants are super helpful and have provided over and above what I would have expected. I just wanted to feed that back to you - a great idea and so well implemented."

All members of staff in RISE have received training in the Goal Reality Options Will (GROW) Approach to coaching. Staff in RISE may also use approaches such as Solution Circles to support school staff to identify solutions. This approach will enable RISE to provide extra support to schools, to support implementation of evidence-based approaches, actively promoted within Reading.

Areas for development

- More systematic feedback from parents / carers and children and young people on their experience of the EHCP process is required

- More feedback from parents / carers and children and young people on their experience of the Disability Support Register / key worker process is needed, as well as more multi agency engagement at a leadership level around the DSR / key worker process.

- There are specific systems difficulties with Continuing Healthcare arrangements for children in Berkshire West with complex needs, which have required the attention and involvement of Executive leaders across BFfC, RBC and BOB ICB.

- A thematic audit programme is required for SEND (in addition to Reading and Berkshire West EHCP audit programme), to enable thematic exploration of areas of partnership learning and development for SEND children and continually improve the SEND system.

What we are doing?

- The ICB is developing a parent / carer forum meeting which will meet on a 6-weekly basis with the purpose of developing the key worker service in coproduction with families who have used it

- Strategic partnerships will develop greater multi agency engagement on the DSR/ key worker service in order to inform development

- The partnership SEND Courageous Conversation partners are overseeing the design and development of a SEND thematic audit programme, focused on understanding the child journey through the SEND system more effectively and informing onward both practice, and system, design and development.

- RBC and ICB CEOs are in active dialogue about the challenges with Continuing Healthcare arrangements. In lieu of a sustainable solution being reached, Berkshire West Directors of Children's Services and BOB ICB's Director of Nursing have agreed a set of interim arrangements for Berkshire West children, which will be piloted.

Leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish

Strengths

- Reading partnership leaders demonstrate a values-led approach to leadership, that is supportive and enabling to multi-agency and frontline practice, and prioritises compassionate child focus in all partnership discussions.

- Clinics for children with complex health needs take place in schools, bringing together parents / carers, health professionals from RBH and BHFT and school staff. Team around the Child approach is used in complex cases.

- The Virtual School coordinates regular meetings with social care, education, health economy and SEND colleagues, to review Children Looked After and children with asocial worker, individually, to coordinate care, support and management of risk.

- A weekly SEN Panel enables multiagency review of children with SEND who benefit from partnership coordination and shared oversight.

- The significant investment in Therapeutic Thinking in schools and the wider education system, led by the School Effectiveness Service, enables a trauma informed and compassionate approach to supporting and understanding children

with SEND, and provides conditions for SEND children to thrive. This is experienced by many frontline colleagues across the partnership as a supportive and compassionate system in which to work.

- There is a good understanding of the capacity and skills in mainstream, schools, and the priority learning and development gaps. There is an extensive SEND training programme and guidance for schools, as well as tailored guidance and support for SENCOs. On demand training has been developed since the pandemic to facilitate access for practitioners. Training programme for schools includes training from Health, e.g. Children & Young People's Therapy Service. An updated audit of schools' training needs was completed in Summer 2024 and is informing enhanced training for September 2024 onwards.

- All children under 5 with complex health needs are offered a joint meeting with health staff from across health providers including RBH and BHFT.

- SEND training, development and resource provision has been tailored to health economy professionals in response to their roles, practitioners within BHFT and RBHFT undertake EHCP training (provided by DCO and staff from SEN Team in Education or from within BHFT from internal staff SEND advisors). In addition, health economy staff undertake the Oliver McGowan training to ensure that children with autism are appropriately supported

- In the 2023-34 academic year, Reading has invested significantly in its SEND team. To improve the quality of service provided to children with SEND, their families and schools, three additional case officers and an additional senior case officer have been added to the team. This investment in the team has enabled Reading to maintain strong performance in its 20-week deadlines, with current 20 week figures running at over 80% performance. This has also enabled a restructure of the team to create 3 smaller teams focusing on 1. Assessment, 2. 0-13 age group of children and 3. 14-25 age group and preparing for adulthood.

Areas for development

- Skill levels and confidence in schools vary and staff capacity is stretched and staff can have difficulty attending training

- There is a need for more targeting of training to schools with less confidence or where parents are expressing more concerns about SEND provision. Plans are in place through the RISE and PINS programmes to resolve identified gaps in training

- The pressures and strains of the complexity of the SEND system (national context) on the frontline SEND officers and on clinical colleagues providing autism and ADHD assessments for example, are recognised and understood by SEND strategic leaders. A compassionate leadership model that prioritises frontline staff welfare has been a values-led approach from Reading's strategic leaders.

- Continued promotion of what is ordinarily available across all services, including Health, is needed in order to avoid escalation of need, and a reduction in potentially avoidable EHCP statutory processes being undertaken.

- There have been specific local challenges relating to the establishment and sustaining of shared continuing healthcare arrangements, which have created specific challenges for children's care and integrated planning.

What we are doing?

- Enhanced and targeted RISE/PINS joint schools staff development programme launching September 2024, informed by the summer 2024 training audit.

- SEN support teams and RISE are adapting the SEND training programme, and advice to schools, to offer more bespoke training to target individual schools.

- Following the South East Sector Led Improvement (SESLIP) review of the partnership oversight of SEND in Reading, a six monthly review of the progress made with partnership recommendations and learning will be undertaken in November 2024, to ensure leadership and management oversight of timely progress with the SEND system transformation and development.

- The SEND Communications workstream is working tirelessly on raising awareness of services which are ordinarily available through the Local Offer (including Health services), working closely with the RISE and PINS programmes.

- The challenges relating to continuing healthcare are subject to the consideration of BOB ICB CEO and RBC's CEO and while these matters are reviewed and addressed, Berkshire West Directors of Children's Services and ICB Nursing Director have agreed a new pilot arrangement for Continuing Healthcare Panels in Berkshire West.

Conclusion

In the context of a complex national and regional context and high demand for SEND support, Reading has a strong, values and needs led, approach to SEND transformation, with a focus on improving outcomes for Reading's SEND children to maximise opportunities for them to flourish.

The commitment of all partners to improving outcomes for children and to learning together has led to a significant amount of activity in Reading, across the partnership, in close collaboration with parents and carers who have invested significant time and effort to help continually improve the system.

Reading's partnership openness to reflecting together on areas of ongoing development, transformation and integration, has led to a refresh of the SEND strategic focus in 2024;

Reading is a system continually growing, innovating and improving to improve outcomes for SEND children and families.

We finish with the voice of Reading SEND families:

Parent carer feedback on support to access short breaks. I really didn't have a clue where to start! Autism Berkshire told me to contact you guys, and so glad I did! My son now attends short breaks, which I didn't know he could all these years and thank you for all the other information too, wow, and I wish my school and other people who I've known would have told me about you year ago, better late than never! **(March 2023)**

Parent carer feedback on support provided by FIS/SEND Local Offer - school SENCO signposted the family to the SEND Local Offer team for information and guidance on wrap around childcare option and support for the family. 'if the school hadn't told me about the local offer I would still be lost in the system to find out what support was available, thank you for all your help, it has allowed me to continue working and get some activities for my child' (**May 2023**)

Short Breaks - Summer 2023 - feedback from parent carer - FIS/Local Offer have been supporting a parent to access information and local services to support her and the young person. The parent thanked us for keeping her updated on all things SEND through the Local Offer, however she also wanted to thank her words 'the short breaks organiser'. This year is the first time she has used short breaks for her child and was so impressed and appreciative of the offer. Wanted me to pass on her thanks to the team. **(September 2023)**

Parent carer feedback - the hospital told me contact the local offer to help me find support services, as my child has just been diagnosed. I'm so pleased they gave me your details as we were so stuck and felt worried about where are we going to get help. Thank you for spending the time explaining and signposting to some great services, who we have contacted and they are already helping us with lots of support. Thank you again, what a great service. **(December 2023)**

Outreach event attended by FIS/SEND Local Offer Team - Addington Special School - Preparing for Adulthood & Opportunities event for young people/parent carers - 17th April 2024 - Feedback from the school - We would like to say a heartfelt thank you for joining us at our Opportunities evening here at Addington School. Your time and effort to attend were truly appreciated. Your presence and participation helped make it a memorable and instructive evening for our parents/carers and young people. The feedback we received from our parents/carers showed that they all valued having such an event at school where they can speak to organisations such as yourselves who could be valuable to them now or in the future. Some also mentioned that it was more beneficial talking to someone face to face than on the phone or through email. We hope that you also gained some insight into the needs of our young people and how you might mutually benefit in the future. Once again we thank you for attending and look forward to seeing you at our next Opportunities evening. Martina Christie. **(April 2024)**

Feedback from the Destination event at The Avenue School - attended by FIS/SEND Local Offer team - 'Huge thank you for taking the time to attend the Destination Event, Parents have already start to feedback they feel well informed and students were delighted to research their next steps options, activities, and services that are available to them locally. The event so well attended, thank you for making it such a success!' Helen Bardsley (**May 2024**)

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Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee 02 July 2025	Reading Borough Council Working better with you

Title	Autism Strategy: Year 3 Action Plan update
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Sunny Mehmi
Lead Councillor	Cllr Paul Gittings
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	That the Adult Social Care & Education Committee note this report as progress of the Year 3 (2024/25) All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   The purpose of this report is to inform the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee of the progress of delivery against the Year 3 (2024/25) All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan across Reading.

1.2   The Reading Autism Strategy and the Action Plan is unfunded and delivered within the existing resources of the partner members of the Autism Partnership Board.

1.3   Over the last year (2024/25) delivery of the Action Plan has been noted across all workstreams and actions were delivered on time.

2.   Policy Context

2.1.   The Autism Act 2009 set out the requirements for local authorities and NHS bodies to work with local partners to improve services and support autistic people. The Act put a duty on Government to produce and regularly review an 'Autism Strategy' to meet the needs of children, young people and adults with autism in England. The latest Autism Strategy was published in July 2021: 'The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026. Reading's strategy and action plan enables us to align the national priorities with local demands and needs of residents in Reading with autism.

2.2.   The Reading All Age Autism Strategy was adopted at the Health and Wellbeing Board on the 20th January 2023. It was agreed at that Board that regular updates on the progress of the action plan would be presented back to the Board and ACE Committee.

2.3.   Public and partner engagement was a core element of developing Reading's Autism All Age Strategy (2022-2026), including autistic people and their families and carers, third sector and voluntary organisations and professionals from across Reading. Engagement and coproduction took place via interviews, workshops, surveys, forums, feedback through existing local groups, targeted outreach to groups and feedback sessions. This insight was used to inform and shape the strategy and its action plan, and to test emerging findings, recommendations, priorities, and vision development.

2.4.   As a result of the engagement and feedback **Seven** priorities were developed:

1. Improving awareness, understanding and acceptance of autism
2. Improving support and access to early years, education and supporting positive transitions and preparing for adulthood
3. Increasing employment, vocational and training opportunities autistic people
4. Better lives for autistic people – tackling health and care inequalities and building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care
5. Housing and supporting independent living
6. Keeping safe and the criminal justice system
7. Supporting families and carers of autistic people

2.5.　The Reading All Age Autism Strategy and its associated Action Plan is delivered by partners who form the Reading Autism Partnership Board. This Board reports directly into the Health and WellBeing Board to ensure this strategy remains a priority and owned by all partner agencies. The Autism Partnership Board has presentation from the following agencies:
- RBC Adult Social Care (Chair)
- Reading Families Forum
- BOB Integrated Care Board
- Brighter Futures for Children (Operational and Commissioning representatives)
- Adults Commissioning & Contracts
- Autism Berkshire
- Royal Berkshire Hospital
- Thames Valley Police

3.　The Proposal

3.1.　The following outlines the progress Partner agencies have made in delivering Year 3 of the All-Age Autism Strategy listed under key workstreams:

Autism Training
- Ongoing Oliver McGowen training for all health and care staff.
- Autism awareness drop-in session run by Adult Social Care for all Reading Borough Council staff
- The majority of Schools have had the Good Autism Practice (GAP) training as part of the Reading Inclusion Support in Education.

Early Years Support
- Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) continue to attend where capacity allows the Education, Health and Care Plan panel.
- Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have embedded Good Autism Practice training from Award in Education and Training (AET) training into Inclusive Practise in Early Years training for Early Years Sector.
- Early Years ARPS (18 FTE places) supporting access to early years provision.

Education Support
- The Autism Growth Approach is Reading's strategic approach to developing neuropositive practice in schools. It was written in response to the increasing numbers of autistic and neurodivergent children in the population, a lack of professional confidence in supporting this community and information from neurodivergent children and their families about their lived experiences in Schools. The strategy outlined the need for inclusive, equitable education that shifted the perspectives and narratives about neurodivergent people from deficit to difference and supported school and setting staff to make evidence informed reasonable adjustments so that autistic and neurodivergent children can thrive authentically and confidently in education.
- The Growth strategy has achieved the following outcomes:
➢ Training and Capacity Building: 63% of Reading schools have completed AET's good autism practice training. This has significantly raised awareness and

competence among educators. Other initiatives such as the Instructional coaching Project and PINS project has also involved several schools in embedding best practice approaches.

- ➢ Systemic Support: The plan and supporting research and training formed the basis of the RISE operating manual, guiding advisory support and leadership practices in schools. RISE have undertaken 314 school visits to-date to support implementation of these approaches.
- ➢ Professional Networks: The AET Hub's professional network has fostered shared practice and peer support, particularly within Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs).
- ➢ Quality Assurance and ARP development: New places have been created in ARPs within mainstream settings. ARP training, advice and QA processes have been further developed based on the five-point plan. ARP QA visits and SEND reviews have highlighted strengths following training, in environmental adaptations, curriculum planning, and teaching methods that support memory and reduce cognitive load.
- ➢ Community Engagement: Neuropositive approaches were discussed and reinforced at yearly local SEND conferences, amplifying the voices of national autistic and neurodivergent experts and reinforcing community commitment. Good Autism Practice training has been provided for officers working with schools and for departments across BFfC.

- Development of the Reading Inclusion Five Point Plan (2024–26), aimed at embedding neuro-affirmative practices across schools in Reading. Rooted in evidence-based strategies from the Autism Education Trust (AET), National Autistic Society (NAS), Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), and Department for Education (DfE), the plan seeks to create inclusive, supportive environments in which neurodivergent and SEND learners can thrive. The five-point plan outlines practical, research-informed strategies that every teacher and school should adopt:
    - ➢ Environmental Adaptations: Schools have reduced sensory distractions, used high-quality visuals, and simplified spoken instructions to support cognitive processing and reduce overload.
    - ➢ Instructional Practices: Teachers are encouraged to use principles of instruction, build in processing time, and scaffold tasks to ensure accessibility.
    - ➢ Behaviour and Routines: Emphasis is placed on teaching routines until they become automatic, using quiet transitions, and adopting relational behaviour approaches.
    - ➢ Curriculum and Communication: Specific curriculum content has been developed to meet the needs of neurodivergent learners, with a focus on language development and oracy.
    - ➢ Whole-School Culture: All staff receive autism practice training, and schools promote positive representation and active listening to neurodivergent voices.

Transitions to Adulthood
- Over 3500 hours of social development by promoting play as a wellbeing tool and provide access for young people to play support building resilience and key life skills most of which will be reaching autistic young people.
- Monthly meetings held between Brighter Futures for Children and Adult Social Care to ensure a seamless transition of young people into adulthood.
- SEN Strand 4 Action Plan refreshed with focus on commissioning services to meet future need, health and employment support
- Refresh of the Preparing for Adulthood Policy and Web pages.

Employment Support

- Between April 2024 and mid-March 2025, Elevate Careers Service (BFfC) had 706 careers information, advice and guidance interventions with young people aged 16 to 25 who were registered NEET (not in education, employment or training) or were at risk of NEET. 144 of those sessions were with young people who we knew were SEN or SEND.

- Elevate continued operating an appointment system from the central location at St Mary's Butts, at Reed Recruitment Agency. They have ensured that young people had access to the Elevate support from other locations such as Reading College, Katesgrove Community Centre and RBC Civic Centre.

- Elevate have worked closely with the careers leads at The Avenue School and Brookfields School and delivered 4 days of 1:1 careers guidance sessions to 24 students.

- In December 2024, in total 421 young people aged 16- 25 with an Education and Health Care plan were registered on the system. 81.2% participated in mainstream education and training (In comparison, South East 46.1% and 51.3% England); 3.1% were registered in supported internship (0.6% South East and 0.9% England)

- In 2024, Elevate has worked on tracking all young people aged 16-25 with SEND ensuring that our post 16 SEND data is robust so the right support could be directed to those who needed our support to access education or employment. In December 2024 only 1% of our cohort's destination was recorded as "not known" (in relation to their current destination in education or employment). In comparison, the average "not known" % for South East was 41.3% and 33.5% nationally in England.

- In December 2024, 8.6% of the cohort was registered NEET, the NEET figure for South East was 8.1% and 10.3% in England. (source of data NCCIS)

- Elevate continued to lead with The Post 16 Participation and Engagement network, whose key members include several key post 16 providers from education, employment including Thames Water, John Lewis Partnership, Reading College, New Meaning Training, Chiltern Training, Reading Borough Council Apprenticeships Team, Starting Point mentoring charity, DWP, Berkshire LEP.

- In July 2024 Elevate organised a careers fair for young people aged 16 to 25 including year 11 leavers with SEN/EHCP and those at risk of NEET after leaving school. Over 105 young people aged 16-25 and many parents and support workers attended on the day. Representatives attended from Army careers, Activate Learning – college courses, Adult Social Care, AWE, BFfC - Early Years Careers, Chiltern Training – Childcare and Business apprenticeships, DWP, John Lewis & Waitrose, New Meaning– Achieve, Boast, Sport and Construction programmes, New Directions College, NHS, Reading Borough Council – Apprenticeship team, Shaw Trust – Supported internships, Starting Point – Mentoring programmes, Thames Water – Apprenticeships and employability advice, Ways into Work – Supported Internships.

Vocational Support

- New Directions College provide toolkits to support teaching staff to deliver provision to adults with autism along with refresher training in working with adults with autistic traits.

- New Directions College has a supported learning course provision which support adults develop skills to support more independent living and or into work – including autistic adults and neurodiversity.

- New Directions College works with employers to provide work experience opportunities and as part of that process we ensure that the learners needs are clearly communicated to employers - which will include adults with autism.

Healthcare Support

- During 2024, the Learning Disability and Autism ICB team have established a monthly oversight board that brings together mental health provider trusts, VCSE representation and lived experience to review and monitor progress of the Learning Disability and Autism work programmes

- Ongoing support to 40 primary schools to understand how to support and meet the needs of neuro-diverse children in school settings. Work took place in partnership with BHFT, RISE team and parent carers forums.

- Commissioning of work across Berkshire to understand profiling and support needs. ICB has led on developing a policy to standardise Dynamic Support Registers (DSR) across our system. The DSR is a national policy that aims to identify autistic CYP and adults that are at risk of MH inpatient admission and promote a multi-agency response and intervention to reduce inappropriate admission under MHA

- ICB has led on developing a policy in relation to Care, education and Treatment Reviews (CeTR) to standardise practice across the system. CeTR are a national policy and aims to ensure that a persons needs are reviewed prior to admission to a MH inpatient admission to ensure that the correct community support and intervention is provided to prevent inappropriate admissions, and if an admission is appropriate for treatment of a co-occurring MH condition that a persons needs and requirements relating to their autism are understood and care planned for. CeTR also takes place during the inpatient spell occurring at least six monthly, this review ensures that a persons needs and requirements are supported during the inpatient spell, treatment is occurring and that there are plans (and progress) toward discharge.

- Commissioner Oversight Visits (CoV) are another NHSE requirement to gain assurance that the patient is safe and well and take place on a six weekly basis. The ICB have developed a local policy to standardise this practice across the system.

- An autistic lived experience review of all MH inpatient wards within BOB took place during 2024, this has informed action plans for improving inpatient wards for autistic users. This work has supported the NHSE three year Mental health, learning disability and autism inpatient quality transformation plan (2024). Ongoing work to improve MH inpatient settings for autistic service users now sits within this programme of work.

- Version three of a co-produced reasonable adjustment passport for autistic service has been implemented in March 2025, this passport has been developed to specifically focus on improving access to services and has been adopted and implemented across our MH system for adults. Work is now starting with our acute provider trusts to pilot this into out patient clinics.

- During 2024 a reasonable adjustment passport to support dental appointments in community special care dentistry was developed, piloted and evaluated. Pilot demonstrated benefits for service users attending appointments and for dental staff providing the appointment. Work will be taking place during 2025 to embed the passport into the new patient registration process and ensure it is available and can be located within the patient record.

- BOB ICB have established a service user engagement group for neuro-divergent services that supports co-production approaches. The forum meets monthly and engages with services to understand barriers to accessing services or support and identify solutions. Examples of work undertaken includes review of the ambulance experience which led to a range of recommendations being implemented by South Central Ambulance Service, co-production of the reasonable adjustment passport for special care dentistry and identifying reasonable adjustments for accident and emergency departments in acute hospitals.

Supported Living Accommodation

- Supported Living accommodation tender work is underway ahead of going out to tender Autumn 2025. Approved by Reading Borough Council. Needs Analysis completed and service specifications under development. Service user working group has been set up for consultation on the tender to ensure it meets the needs of people with neurodiversity.

Criminal Justice Support

- There has been significant improvement in officer understanding and awareness around Autism.
- Whilst a new Custody suite is still a few years off, but it is being designed with Neurodiversity and vulnerability in mind.

Carers and Family Support

- BFFC have further developed the Short Breaks offer with high take up:
  - December short breaks, attendance 97.5%, 16 spaces
  - Feb half term short breaks, 16 places, 100 % capacity
  - Easter short breaks, 32 places. 100 % attendance.
  - Cressingham Short Breaks Residential Home has had renovation works undertaken to the home to make the garden and outdoor spaces more accessible.
- Relaxed and adapted performances at The Hexagon and South Street, where the production and environment has been specifically designed to welcome people who will benefit from a more relaxed performance environment, including families with young children, people with an Autism Spectrum Condition.
- Visual Stories for those visiting the arts venues are available to view or download. Familiarisation visits for those for whom new venues can cause anxiety are available under arrangement with box office.
- The Access List for arts venues was launched in 2024 this is a way to register needs in order to make the booking process and the show experience as smooth as possible, anyone can join the Access List.
- All library sites except Reading (pending move) have a virtual tour space on homepages for each site example https://www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/all-libraries/tilehurst-library/
- Museums, My Way (partnership with The MERL and Berkshire Autism) - Drop-in breakout space and resources now provided every Saturday at Reading Museum for neurodiverse visitors and their families. In addition, the museum has held special events to talk to people supported by organisations including Berkshire Vision, and Autism Berkshire.
- Staff within Children and Young People's Disabilities Service have accessed Attention Autism Training to assist in direct work with children and young people.
- Carers Partnership service is now embedded with no waits for carers assessments and support.

3.2. The Reading Autism Partnership Board will continue to oversee the delivery of the action plan through regular governance meeting and will provide an annual report to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee and the Health and Well-Being Board

3.3. Appendix 2 shows the remaining areas of work outstanding which were outlined in the Autism Strategy and is planned in the next year. Given the budget constraints, the following actions may be challenging to achieve: ongoing increasing public awareness, support with getting driving licences and reducing waiting times for autism assessments. However these will be monitored closely through the Board and mitigations sought where possible.

3.4.   Year 4 (2025/26) is the last year of the Autism Strategy, the Board has discussed a light refresh of strategy, confirming the priorities with people with lived experience and partners. It is anticipated this work will take place between October 2025 and March 2026.

4.   Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1   The formation of the Autism Partnership Board, the Strategy and Action Plan alongside key partners across the Health, Educational and Voluntary sector ensure that Strategic Aims set out in the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy are met:
1.   Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
2.   Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
3.   Help children and families in early years
4.   Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
5.   Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

4.2   Furthermore the following ambitions are realised through the work plan of the Board, All age Autism Strategy and its Action Plan.

- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

- Contributions to Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing of children, young people and adults with autism.

4.3   In addition, the Autism Strategy aims to deliver the the council plan vision to help Reading realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success, promoting more equal communities in Reading and Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children.

5.   Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1   There is no environmental or climate implications arising from this report. This is an existing strategy and action plan with no additions to be considered that would have environmental and climate implications.

6.   Community Engagement

6.1   Since the development of the Autism Strategy and Action Plan throughout 2022, no further consultation has taken place. However ongoing partnership work to deliver the strategy and its action plan continues. We ensure the voice of autistic and neurodiverse residents is reflected through our partners on the Board.

7.   Equality Implications

7.1   Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2   An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed as part of the development of the Autism Strategy and Action Plan for the January 2023, this has been reviewed and no amendments required, see Appendix 3.

8   Other Relevant Considerations

8.1   Not applicable

9   Legal Implications

9.1   There are no duties for the Local Authority regarding the Autism Board however there is a requirement to carry out / implement the Autism Strategy which was published in July 2021: 'The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026 on a local level.   The Local Authority also need to consider the needs of children, young people and adults as part of our legal duties under the Care and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014.

9.2   Under the Section 1 and 4 of the Care Act the Local Authority has a duty to 'Promote individual well-being' and 'Provide Information and Advice. We have a responsibility under Section 9 to 'Assess an adult care and support needs' and under section 18 a 'Duty to meet the care and support needs'.

10   Financial Implications

10.1   There are currently no significant budget implications regarding the implementation for the Strategy and Action Plan. The delivery of the Action Plan is within existing resources and reviewing existing pathways to meet the needs of residents. The care and support needs of our autistic residents who have eligible needs and require social care are met as per our legal duties.

11   Timetable for Implementation

11.1   Not applicable

12   Background Papers

12.1   There are none.

Appendices

1. All Age Autism Action Plan Year 3 update

2. Reading All Age Autism Strategy Priorities - What we said we would do and is still outstanding

3. The Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 1 - Reading All-Age Autism Action Plan Year 3 2024/25 – Year end updates

Priority 1: Improving awareness, understanding and acceptance of autism			Lead (s): Autism Partnership Board	
Action	Measure of Success / Outcome	By When	By Whom	Work completed in 2024/25

Create opportunities for more regular and informal engagement (coffee mornings, autism forums)	Improved engagement	March 2025	Autism Berkshire RISE	• Autism Berkshire in 2024/26 supported 544 people with 4388 contacts.
				• Programmes of work delivered by Autism Berkshire included:
				   ○ Autistic Adults are offered an individual consultation when they first register. They can book another session later if they require.
				   ○ They can choose between a phone call, MS Teams call, face to face session either before or after the Reading Drop In (Monday afternoons twice a month), or a booked appointment at Maidenhead Library.
				   ○ Drop In sessions (daytime in Reading or evening in Maidenhead, rather than book another appointment as this is more efficient and builds independence and resilience; and promotes peer support and reduces isolation.
				   ○ Group workshops to learn about autism are held online using Zoom
				
				• Autism awareness drop-in session run by Adult Social Care for all Reading Borough Council staff
				
				• Ongoing support to 40 primary schools to understand how to support and meet the needs of neuro-diverse children in school settings. Work took place in partnership with BHFT, RISE team and parent carers forums.

Working with Reading Buses to increase knowledge of Autism	Raised awareness of Reading Bus workforce	March 2025	BFFC	• Work deferred to 2025/26

Working with Ethical Reading improve the understanding and guidelines for employers, including reasonable adjustments	Increased engagement from local employers	March 2025	BFFC	• Elevate continued to lead with The Post 16 Participation and Engagement network, whose key members include several key post 16 providers from education, employment including Thames Water, John Lewis Partnership, Reading College, New Meaning Training, Chiltern Training, Reading Borough Council Apprenticeships Team, Starting Point mentoring charity, DWP, Berkshire LEP. • Elevate organised a careers fair for young people aged 16 to 25 including year 11 leavers with SEN/EHCP and those at risk of NEET after leaving school. Over 105 young people aged 16-25 and many parents and support workers attended. Their were representatives from Army careers, Activate Learning – college courses, Adult Social Care, AWE, BFfC - Early Years Careers, Chiltern Training – Childcare and Business apprenticeships, DWP, John Lewis & Waitrose, New Meaning– Achieve, Boast, Sport and Construction programmes, New Directions College, NHS, Reading Borough Council – Apprenticeship team, Shaw Trust – Supported internships, Starting Point – Mentoring programmes, Thames Water – Apprenticeships and employability advice, Ways into Work – Supported Internships.

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Priority 2: Improving support and access to early years, education and supporting positive transitions and preparing for adulthood		**Lead (s): BFFC & Adult Social Care**		
Action	**Measure of Success / Outcome**	**By When**	**By Whom**	**Work completed in 2024/25**
Dissemination of national material to raise awareness in schools to addressing bullying towards autistic children	Improve the awareness in schools to addressing bullying towards autistic children	March 2025	BFFC	• Majority of Schools have had the Good Autism Practice (GAP) training as part of the Reading Inclusion Support in Education • The Autism Growth Approach is Reading's strategic approach to developing neuropositive practice in schools. It was written in response to the increasing numbers of autistic and

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Action	Measure of Success / Outcome	By When	By Whom	Work completed in 2024/25
				neurodivergent children in the population, a lack of professional confidence in supporting this community and information from neurodivergent children and their families about their lived experiences in Schools. The strategy outlined the need for inclusive, equitable education that shifted the perspectives and narratives about neurodivergent people from deficit to difference and supported school and setting staff to make evidence informed reasonable adjustments so that autistic and neurodivergent children can thrive authentically and confidently in education.
Ensure there is a clear process for information sharing in place between BFFC and ASC on children transitioning into adulthood	Redesign of the Preparing for Adulthood Website\n\nRefresh of the Preparing for Adulthood Policy	March 2025	BFFC / ASC	• Preparing for Adulthood website and policy reviewed and refreshed\n\n• Monthly meetings held between Brighter Futures for Children and Adult Social Care to ensure a seamless hand over of young people\n\n• SEN Strand 4 Action Plan refreshed with focus on commissioning services to meet future need, health and employment support

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Priority 3. Increasing employment, vocation and training opportunities autistic people	**Lead (s): BFFC Elevate & New Directions College**

Action	Measure of Success / Outcome	By When	By Whom	Work completed in 2024/25
ASC to work in partnership with Job Centre+ to increase employment opportunities	Increase in the number of ASC LDA service users in employment	March 2025	ASC / Job Centre +	• ASC have established strong collaborative links with Disability Employment Advisers at Reading Jobcentre. Through this partnership with Jobcentre Plus, we aim to:\n ○ Identify and tailor job opportunities that align with the strengths and interests of individuals on the autism spectrum.

Action	Measure of Success / Outcome	By When	By Whom	Work completed in 2024/25
				- Provide ongoing support to both employers and employees to ensure sustainable employment. - Raise awareness among local employers about the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce. - Facilitate training and workshops to improve workplace inclusivity and understanding of Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC). - Together, we are committed to creating a more inclusive job market where adults with Autism can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the workforce.
Targeted work with schools and employers to support young people	Increase participation of autistic young people 16 to 18 (up to 25 with an EHCP) in accessing employment, education and training opportunities	Ongoing	Elevate, BFFC	- Between April 2024 and mid-March 2025, Elevate Careers Service (BFfC) had 706 careers information, advice and guidance interventions with young people aged 16 to 25 who were registered NEET (not in education, employment or training) or were at risk of NEET. 144 of those sessions were with young people who we knew were SEN or SEND. - Elevate continued operating an appointment system from the central location at St Mary's Butts, at Reed Recruitment Agency. They have ensured that young people had access to the Elevate support from other locations such as Reading College, Katesgrove Community Centre and RBC Civic Centre. - Elevate have worked closely with the careers leads at The Avenue School and Brookfields School and delivered 4 days of 1:1 careers guidance sessions to 24 students.

Priority 4. Better lives for autistic people – tackling health and care inequalities and building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care	**Lead (s): BOB Integrated Care Board (ICB)**

Action	Measure of Success / Outcome	By When	By Whom	Work completed in 2024/25

Reasonable Adjustment Projects:				
Reasonable Adjustments into Specialist Dentistry Pathways	Pilot completed. Pilot Evaluated Findings and Learning Published Implementation as BAU		BOB ICB and TVCDS	• During 2024 a reasonable adjustment passport to support dental appointments in community special care dentistry was developed, piloted and evaluated. Pilot demonstrated benefits for service users attending appointments and for dental staff providing the appointment. Work will be taking place during 2025 to embed the passport into the new patient registration process and ensure it is available and can be located within the patient record.
Reasonable Adjustments into acute / MH hospitals planned procedures	Pilot completed. Pilot Evaluated Findings and Learning Published	March 2025	BOB ICB RBH, BHT, OUH	• Version three of a co-produced reasonable adjustment passport for autistic service has been implemented in March 2025, this passport has been developed to specifically focus on improving access to services and has been adopted and implemented across our MH system for adults. Work is now starting with our acute provider trusts to pilot this into out patient clinics. • An autistic lived experience review of all MH inpatient wards within BOB took place during 2024, this has informed action plans for improving inpatient wards for autistic users. This work has supported the NHSE three year Mental health, learning disability and autism inpatient quality transformation plan (2024). Ongoing work to improve MH inpatient settings for autistic service users now sits within this programme of work.
Improve DSR consent rates and uptake among autistic people in the community	Reduction of inpatient admissions for autistic people	March 2025	BOB ICB	• ICB has led on developing a policy to standardise Dynamic Support Registers (DSR) across our system. The DSR is a national policy that aims to identify autistic CYP and adults that are at risk of MH inpatient admission and promote a multi-agency response and intervention to reduce inappropriate admission under Mental Health Act
Ensure that Commissioner Oversight Visits (COVs) put	Improved engagement with COVs	March 2025	BOB ICB	• Commissioner Oversight Visits (CoV) are another NHSE requirement to gain assurance that the patient is safe and well and take place on a six weekly basis. The ICB have developed a local policy to standardise this practice across the system.

Action	Measure of Success / Outcome	By When	By Whom	Work completed in 2024/25
reasonable adjustments in place for Commissioner Oversight Visits				
Improve C(E)TR consent rates and uptake among autistic people, both in the in-patient and community contexts and ensuring reasonable adjustments are put in place	Increasing numbers of C(E)TRs for autistic people and reduced numbers of refusals	March 2025	BOB ICB	• ICB has led on developing a policy in relation to Care, education and Treatment Reviews (CeTR) to standardise practice across the system. CeTR are a national policy and aims to ensure that a persons needs are reviewed prior to admission to a MH inpatient admission to ensure that the correct community support and intervention is provided to prevent inappropriate admissions, and if an admission is appropriate for treatment of a co-occurring MH condition that a persons needs and requirements relating to their autism are understood and care planned for. CeTR also takes place during the inpatient spell occurring at least six monthly, this review ensures that a persons needs and requirements are supported during the inpatient spell, treatment is occurring and that there are plans (and progress) toward discharge.

Priority 5. Housing and supporting independent living		Lead (s): Adult Social Care Commissioning		
No specific Year 3 actions				
Action	**Measure of Success / Outcome**	**By When**	**By Whom**	**Work completed in 2024/25**
Priority 6 Keeping safe and improving support within the criminal and youth justice system		**Lead (s): Autism Berkshire**		
Action	**Measure of Success / Outcome**	**By When**	**By Whom**	**Work completed in 2024/25**
Further develop a Neurodiversity Support Network for officers and Staff	Helping to raise awareness across the board and officers, which aims to normalise Neurodiversity in the workplace.	April 2025	Thames Valley Police	• There has been significant improvement in officer understanding and awareness around Autism. • The new Custody suite which is still a few years off is being designed with Neurodiversity and vulnerability in mind.

Priority 7: Supporting families and carers of autistic people			Lead (s): Autism Partnership Board		
Action	**Measure of Success / Outcome**	**By When**	**By Whom**	**Work completed in 2024/25**	

Work across the One Reading partnership to improve the parent / carers assessment	To support carers better, all organisations will refer all parents to the Local Offer, so they can access information and signposting, as some parents are reporting that they are unaware of the service	April 2025	BFFC	• BFFC have further developed the Short Breaks offer with high take up:
				   o December short breaks, attendance 97.5%, 16 spaces
				   o Feb half term short breaks, 16 places, 100 % capacity
				   o Easter short breaks, 32 places. 100 % attendance.
				   o Cressingham Short Breaks Residential Home has had renovation works undertaken to the home to make the garden and outdoor spaces more accessible.	

Recommission the Carers contract ensuring there is an emphasis for Carers of autistic residents	New carers contract in place	April 2025	Public Health	• Carers Partnership service is now embedded with no waits for carers assessments and support.	

Appendix 2 - Reading All Age Autism Strategy Priorities – Year 4 Deliverables inc ongoing work from previous years

PRIORITY 1 – IMPROVING AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF AUTISM WITHIN SOCIETY

- Review pathways to ensure these recognise specific needs of older autistic adults, women with autism, autistic people from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- Employment - Improved understanding and guidelines for employers, including reasonable adjustments (applying anticipatory reasonable adjustments duty – Equality Act 2010).
- We will develop and test an autism public understanding and acceptance initiative, working with autistic people, their families, and the voluntary sector.
- Use multiple methods of raising awareness of existing pre assessment and post diagnosis support provision and making it clear and easy to find including addressing language and cultural barriers for underrepresented groups, to aid proactive identification of people awaiting assessment, crisis prevention and prevention of avoidable admissions into inpatient mental health settings, making it easier to find and engage with the appropriate support, offered throughout the life course.

PRIORITY 2 – IMPROVING SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION, SUPPORTING POSITIVE TRANSITIONS AND PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

- Ensuring school transport is appropriate for autistic children through training for drivers and escorts to know the needs of the autistic children and how best to communicate with them, so provide better assistance. Liaise with relevant Transport teams.
- Additional support of getting driving licence for people with anxiety and sensory difficulties
- Autistic CYP are supported to ensure better outcomes throughout their education by schools making reasonable adjustments and a commitment to address bullying towards autistic children
- Improve transitions planning for all (education/social care/health) children and adult services – more work to be done so Young People and family are provided with robust information to support

PRIORITY 3 – SUPPORTING MORE AUTISTIC PEOPLE INTO VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

- Identify the strengths and needs of neurodivergent CYO and adults and support them to make good progress and have good outcomes.
- Develop a clear pathway through school, from school, in further and higher education and into vocational training, volunteering and work opportunities
- Peer mentorship/ championship training
- Improved understanding and guidelines for employers, including reasonable adjustments both during recruitment and in employment.

PRIORITY 4 – BETTER LIVES FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE – TACKLING HEALTH AND CARE INEQUALITIES FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE, BUILDING THE RIGHT SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN INPATIENT CARE

- Continue to work to reduce waiting times for autism assessments for children and young people.
- In order to tackle morbidity and preventable death in individuals with autism it is of utmost importance to provide regular physical health checks and to maintain high level of
- Raise the long waiting times for adult assessments in order to increase resources to bring the waiting times down.
- Provision for autistic adults who received a late diagnosis and have different support needs to those who have had earlier diagnosis or who are without learning disabilities – an identified gap.
- Action to tackle the over representation of autistic young people in mental health beds.
- Groups for adults especially social clubs for diverse interests in spaces appropriate for autistic people due to noise and sensory stimulation (i.e. light, noise, volume of music)
- Invest into activities and services adapted/adjusted to meet the needs of autistic people and to minimise sensory impact.

PRIORITY 5 – HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

- Improved data to help inform future commissioning of adapted / specialist housing.
- Autistic adults supported to access suitable accommodation
- Improve transitions planning to support independent living
- Develop innovative models of accommodation with agile care and support options including reablement.
- Address the specific needs of autistic adults in future housing and homelessness strategies
- Make better use of existing specialist housing
- Ensure there is clearer identification by BFfC of the requirements for children within their current homes so that adaptations may be considered.

PRIORITY 6 – KEEPING SAFE AND IMPROVING SUPPORT WITHIN THE CRIMINAL AND YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Work with partners to better understand the representation and needs of Autistic people within the CJ system
- Ensure partners are aware of and using the registered intermediary where appropriate.

PRIORITY 7 – IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND CARERS OF AUTISTIC PEOPLE

- In order to support carers better, all organisations will refer all parents needing pre-assessment or post-diagnosis support to the Berkshire West NHS Autism and ADHD support service,
- To support carers better, all organisations will refer all parents to the Local Offer, so they can access information and signposting, as some parents are reporting that they are unaware of the service.

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Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:
Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022 - 2026
Directorate:
Directorates of Adult Care and Health Services and Council wide services
Service: **Adult Social Care and Public Health and Wellbeing Team**
Name: **Sunny Mehmi**
Job Title: **Assistant Director: Adult Social Care**
Date of assessment:**12/04/2025**

Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By
1.0	Creation	Amanda Nyeke	07/06/2022	
2.0	Reviewed	Sunny Mehmi	09/06/2022	
3.0	Reviewed	Sunny Mehmi	11/10/2022	
4.0	Reviewed	Amanda Nyeke	03/11/2022	
5.0	Reviewed	Sunny Mehmi	09/06/2024	
6.0	Reviewed	Sunny Mehmi	09/06/2025	

Scope your proposal

1.   What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

The proposal is to adopt a Reading All Age Autism Strategy for the period 2022-2026 in accordance with The Autism Act 2009 which sets out the requirements for local authorities and NHS bodies to work with local partners to improve services and support autistic people. The Act put a duty on Government to produce and regularly review an 'Autism Strategy' to meet the needs of adults with autism in England. Following the publication of the latest "**The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026",** Reading has started the development of a local autism strategy. This aligns the national priorities in conjunction with local demands and needs of those autistic residents in Reading.

Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022-2026 sets out key priorities across Reading and the services which serve the Reading autistic population, their families and carers.

The Strategy identifies 7 priorities. These are:

1. Improving awareness, understanding and acceptance of autism

2. Improving support and access to early years, education and supporting positive transitions and preparing for adulthood

3. Increasing employment, vocation and training opportunities autistic people

4. Better lives for autistic people – tackling health and care inequalities and building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care

5. Housing and supporting independent living

6. Keeping safe and the criminal justice system

7. Supporting families and carers of autistic people

2. Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

It is intended to be an important strategy in improving the health, wellbeing and wider outcomes of Reading autistic people, their families and carers;

3. What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

Adopting the 2022-2026 Reading All Age Autism Strategy will give the Autism Partnership Board a focus on the 7 identified priorities (see above), and set a framework for ensuring that plans to address these are monitored effectively and help to:

4. Promoting the partnership working and integration of services.
5. To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all
6. Contributions to Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing of residents with autism.

In turn, the commissioning plans over the next four years should also be driven by and reflect Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022-2026 priorities.
The Strategy is aimed at the entire autistic population in Reading including their families and carers and adopting it should co-ordinate efforts to outcomes for any resident potentially affected by the priority issues.
The Autism Partnership Board will drive performance forward in the chosen priority areas as set out in the Strategy. In addition, the Autism Board will continue to work collaboratively and receive reports and monitor strategy action from other local strategic partnerships involved in supporting autistic people and improving health and wellbeing.
Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022 - 2026 acknowledges the risks related to climate change but is not designed to address those risks at this point in time. However, the implementation plans will endeavour to include detailed actions wherever relevant to address those risks and the health implications of climate risks.

7. Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

- Current autistic children, young people and adults
- Carers and family of autistic people

- Staff and volunteers across care and support providers in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors that support autistic people.

Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

8. **Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others?**
9. **Make reference to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.**

Priority 1 and 4 of the strategy, address raising awareness, acceptance, understanding and reducing the health differences between groups based on the data analysis and consultation we have undergone to ensure all in the population benefit from the strategic aims.

10. **Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Make reference to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.**

No

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.
If **No** you **MUST** complete this statement.
An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Lead Officer
Sunny Mehmi
Assistant Director: Adult Social Care

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Assess the Impact of the Proposal
Your assessment must include:

11.   Consultation

12.   Collection and Assessment of Data

13.   Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?
How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel. Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable. This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

<ins>Consultation</ins>

See section 7. Community Engagement and Information

Collect and Assess your Data
Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.
(Please delete relevant ticks)

14.   Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups

15.   Is there a negative impact?   No

No negative impact in terms of different racial groups has been identified.
Where take up of other services is disproportionately low for some racial groups which may face particular barriers to access, there will be a focusing of resources on those communities as part of the drive to reduce inequalities.
There is an ongoing need to recognise that cultural norms and barriers such as language may impact on access to support, and the All Age Autism Strategy should be a tool to address this.
Responses to the initial engagement raised the importance of ensuring that information and advice about health and wellbeing and other key information is accessible to all groups.

16.   Describe how this proposal could impact on Sex and Gender identity (include pregnancy and maternity, marriage, gender re-assignment)

17.   Is there a negative impact? No

No negative impact in terms of gender has been identified.

18.   Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability

19.   Is there a negative impact? No

No negative impact in terms of disability has been identified.

20.   Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

21.   Is there a negative impact? No

No negative impacts on the grounds of sexual orientation have been identified.

22.   **Describe how this proposal could impact on age**

23.   **Is there a negative impact? No**

No negative impacts on the grounds of age have been identified

24.   **Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief**

25.   **Is there a negative impact? No**

No negative impact in terms of religion or belief has been identified.

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you MUST assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

No negative impact identified – Go to sign off

26.   How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

The long-term impact of adopting Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022 - 2026 should be a reduction in health inequalities and improvement in outcomes for autistic people, their families and carers. In order to track progress towards this goal, Action Plans will be developed with progress reports made to the Autism Partnership Board and fed into the Health and Well Being Board.

Lead Officer
Sunny Mehmi
Assistant Director: Adult Social Care

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Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee **02 July 2025**	Reading Borough Council *Working better with you*

Title	Supported Living Framework Tender
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise, Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care
Report author	Natalie Powell, Commissioning Officer
Lead Councillor	Councillor Paul Gittings, Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	1. That ACE Committee grant delegated authority to the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic to: • Procure and enter into a contract with the successful tenderer(s) for the support/care services to be provided. The contract will be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years). • Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. The Council defines 'supported living' as a service which enables individuals with care needs to live in their own homes as independently as possible with personalised support to facilitate this. Supported living encompasses various models, each adapted to meet an individual's specific needs and aspirations. Some models provide comprehensive, 24/7 wraparound support, while others offer flexible, floating assistance for those with lower support requirements. Accommodation options vary and may include shared housing, group homes, single dwellings, or living arrangements with family, depending on the individual's circumstances.

1.2. The current Supported Living Framework contract commenced on 1st April 2020 and is due to expire on 31st March 2026 with no opportunity for further extensions after running for 5 years. The Procurement of a new Supported Living Framework is proposed to commence in September 2025, which allows sufficient time for the procurement exercise to be completed, mobilisation to happen and the new contract to be effective from 1st April 2026.

1.3. The current spend on supported living is £13m per year, with £10m being spent with the current framework providers and the remaining £3m being used for off framework spot purchases. 367 individuals are accessing Supported Living Services, with 306 utilising support from current framework providers. We plan to implement Lots throughout the

contract, enabling tailored specifications that will help minimise off framework spot purchases.

1.4. It is proposed that the value of the new Supported Living Framework would be £13m per annum, with a total value over the lifetime of the contract of £150m (up to 10 years) including an annual inflationary uplift of 2%. A 5 year initial term, with the option to extend up to 5 years provides flexibility while ensuring long term price stability. It also enables performance evaluation of the new Lots before committing to extend, reduces procurement costs, and encourages supplier investment in Reading.

2. Policy Context

2.1. The Care Act 2014 places a legal duty on local authorities to ensure individuals receive high-quality care and support services that meet their eligible care needs. A fundamental principle of the Act is promoting independence and preventing the escalation of care needs, enabling people to remain in their homes with appropriate support funded through a personal budget.

2.2. The Adult Social Care teams in Reading work alongside Public Health and Housing as part of the Directorate for Communities and Adult Social Care. The Directorate is responsible for meeting the Council's duties under the Care Act 2014, which include:

- Improving independence and wellbeing by ensuring that people can receive services that prevent their needs from becoming more serious. This means working with the local community to understand the resources available, providing or arranging support that can keep people well and identifying people and carers in the local area who might have care and support needs that are not being met.
- Ensuring that people can get the information and advice they need to understand how local services work and make good decisions about their care and support.
- Engaging with local providers to develop a responsive market that can provide sustainable high-quality care and support for the local community – promoting wellbeing and offering people more choice and control over their care.

2.3. In line with In Control's 'Social Care Future' vision (in-control.org.uk), our overriding ambition is to support people to realise their potential, be independent and live in their own homes for as long as possible, whilst ensuring that intensive support is available for those that need it most.

2.4. The Service's 'Supporting the life that matters to you' ethos will be central to this contract, ensuring people can live in their own homes with security of tenure when needed. It also supports individuals in transitioning to independent accommodation, where they can receive assistance as required rather than being tied to a fixed support setting.

2.5. We are committed to ensuring that the voices of individuals with lived experience play a central role in shaping the specification of the contract and influencing the development of Reading's supported living offer. Their insights and perspectives are invaluable in creating services that truly reflect the needs of the community. Furthermore, we actively encourage individuals to participate in the procurement process wherever possible. To facilitate this, we will provide support to help them contribute meaningfully, including assisting in the design of an evaluation question that reflects their lived experience and priorities.

3. Current position

Framework Use

3.1. As of 31st March 2025, a snapshot of commissioned supported living packages shows a total of 367 currently in place. 83% (306 packages, 77% of annual spend) of these are under the current framework contract which consists of 18 providers, 17 of which are active. The remaining 17% (61 packages, 23% of annual spend) are spot purchased

between 28 off framework providers and have been required for various reasons, for example due to the current framework providers often not being able to meet complex needs.

Throughout the year, 61 packages have ceased. A review of the reasons reveals recurring themes, including individuals choosing to discontinue support, informal assistance from family or community networks, and t to direct payments which provide increased choice, control and flexibility.

When comparing data over the lifetime of the current contract, needs analysis demonstrates recurring themes for requiring an off-framework spot provider such as, inability for framework providers to meet the needs, individuals requiring staff with bespoke skills and training to manage complex and specialist needs. Whilst the Council acknowledges in some cases there will always be a need to proceed off framework (e.g. out of area placements), it is intended that the new framework will attract providers who are able to meet the range and complexity of need thus reducing the frequency of off-framework spot placements. This will provide consistent oversight of services, streamline contract management, and ensures that providers under the framework contract share its vision, values, and enablement expectations. Providers will adopt a collaborative approach to service development, supporting long-term objectives throughout the duration of the agreement.

Summary of Needs Analysis

3.2. Throughout the period from 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2025 the Council has seen a 16% increase in the number of commissioned supported living packages. However, it is important to note that the initial year of the contract coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a decline in the number of people moving into services. Over the lifetime of the contract the demand for supported living services has increased on average 4% each year.

Under the new contract, we aim to develop 'move on pathways' within supported living services, enabling individuals to transition into more independent housing options and support services. While demand for supported living is rising, we expect that the introduction of these pathways will facilitate smoother transitions, allowing more individuals to progress through the service and ultimately require less support over time.
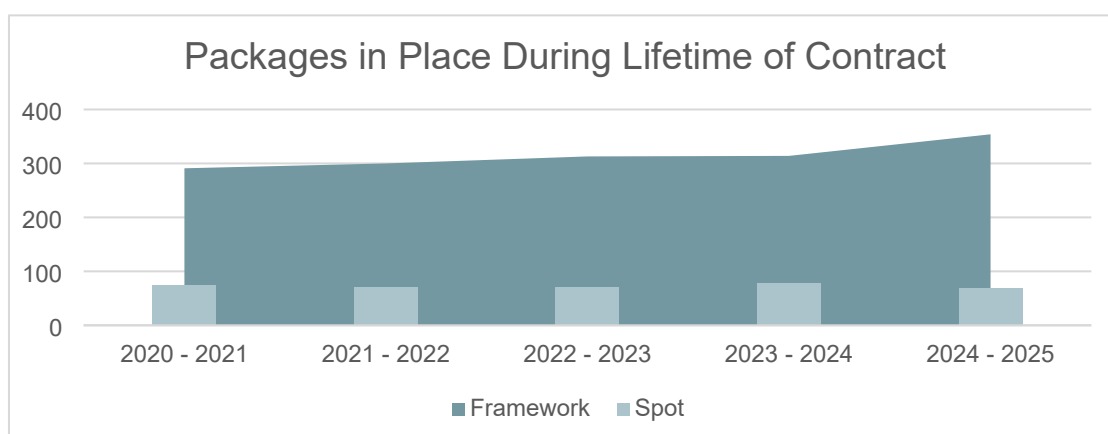
3.3. When comparing the cohort of individuals being supported by framework providers throughout the period 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025, 48% (169 packages) are for people with a Learning Disability and Neurodiversity, 39% (140 packages) are for people with Mental Health issues and 13% (45 packages) have other primary support needs such as sensory needs, physical support, memory and cognition, and social support.

Primary Groups using Framework providers
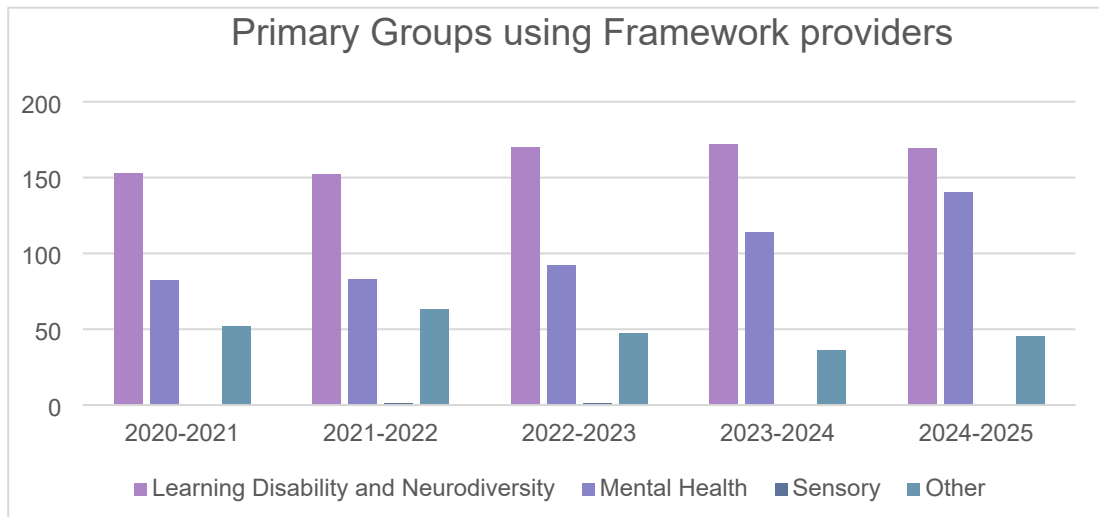
In comparison to individuals being supported by off framework spot providers, 52% (36 packages) are for people with Mental Health issues, 26% (18 packages) for people with Learning Disability and Neurodiversity, 10% (7 packages) for people with Sensory needs, and 12% (8 packages) have other primary support reasons.

Primary Groups using Off-Framework providers
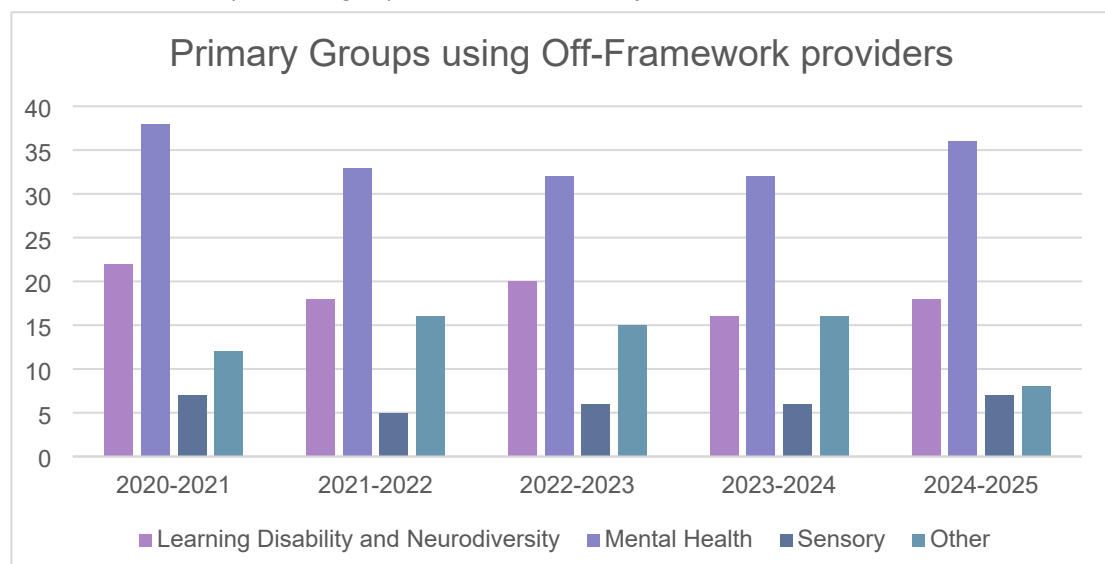
The demand for Learning Disability and Neurodiversity services has increased by 7% when comparing these figures to the first contractual year 2020-2021, and across the lifetime of the contract has increased on average 2% each year.

The demand for Mental Health services has **increased by 55%** when comparing these figures to the first contractual year 2020-2021, and across the lifetime of the contract has increased on average 12% each year evidencing a growing need for providers who have experience and knowledge in this area.

Complex Needs

3.4. The Councils existing supported living framework providers frequently struggle to accommodate individuals with complex needs, requiring the Council to engage with off-framework spot providers to ensure appropriate support is delivered. Currently within Reading the term 'complex needs' is most commonly used with reference to individuals with complex mental health needs. There are no set criteria for determining the threshold of 'complex', but the following characteristics are considered 'complex' by Social Workers, the Eligibility Risk and Review Groups, and Commissioning Teams:

- Personality disorder
- Forensic history (involvement with criminal justice system)

- Alcohol/Substance use
- Current presenting behavioural needs requiring specialist intervention (for example property damage, physical aggression)
- History of placement breakdowns and/or hospitalisations
- Dual needs e.g. Mental Health and Learning Disability & Neurodiversity
- Bespoke accommodation needs/property adaptations
- Bespoke training that is essential to meeting the needs e.g. BSL, Sensory support
- Complex health needs

Using the above criteria, as of 31st March 2025, The Council is funding 41 individuals with 'complex needs' within supported living, representing 11% of the total supported living packages. 4 are supported by framework providers, with the remaining 37 being supported by off-framework spot providers (across 10 different providers).

Complex needs packages are routinely offered to framework providers to bid, but frequently this is unsuccessful. Available data suggests this is due to:

- Limited accommodation options – many shared units with compatibility being a challenge
- Little motivation for framework providers to take these packages on for capacity reasons

Of the 41 individuals, 24 are residing in Reading
Some of the known factors for people with complex needs living outside of Reading are:

- Accommodation requirements not commonly found in Reading, such as bespoke properties or single occupancy options
- Difficult family history requiring physical distance
- Ministry of Justice (MOJ) restrictions. As of 31/3/25 the Council is funding 12 individuals under MOJ restrictions of which 3 are required to live outside of Reading

3.5.   Generally, within Reading Adult Social Care, individuals with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) which can present with complex health conditions and additional sensory needs, are not included within the complex needs category. Individuals with PMLD needs are often placed in residential settings rather than supported living which is something the Council is keen to reduce by having providers who can meet complex, challenging and bespoke needs.

3.6.   17 new residential placements made between 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025 were reviewed to ascertain whether any of the needs could be met by the framework in supported living. Upon reviewing the needs based on the information documented in the assessments, it was felt that should the right provider be available, with the right skill set, that 9 of the 17 could have been considered for supported living. Of the 9; 4 people had mental health issues, 4 had a learning disability & neurodiversity and 1 had the primary group of physical support. This indicates that by having providers on the framework with the required knowledge and capacity, could reduce the number of residential placements made in the future.

Current Pricing

3.7.   The pricing structure for the current supported living framework is a price range model whereby during the procurement process the providers had to propose their hourly rates which were reviewed as part of the evaluation process. Over the lifetime of the contract the price range gap has increased between the lowest and highest paid due to annual inflationary price rises. At the start of the contract, a gap of £1.59 (£15.55 - £17.14) has increased year on year with the gap peaking at £3.14 (£17.67 - £20.81) during the financial year 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025.

For the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026, the price range gap has been reduced to £1.31 (£19.50 - £20.81) as part of the transition towards the new framework. This has meant that some providers were awarded a low, or no uplift for the period. This adjustment ensures greater alignment among all providers as we move forward with the implementation of a standardised hourly rate, promoting consistency and stability across the service.

Providers have also fed back that they are accepting referrals from other local authorities and health over Reading as they receive a higher hourly rate, this suggests that we are paying lower than nearby local authorities and Health The placement of vulnerable individuals in Reading by other local authorities introduces potential financial and safeguarding challenges. Under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act, local authorities and NHS bodies have a legal obligation to provide free aftercare services to individuals previously detained under specific sections of the Act. If an individual receiving Section 117 aftercare is placed in Reading and subsequently detained again, the responsibility for funding their ongoing care may transfer to Reading, depending on their ordinary residence status at the time of their initial detention.

Quality

3.8. The current framework has a tiering system in place, where an Annual Quality Assessment (AQA) is completed with 40% of the quality aspect, and 60% of the hourly rate determining the Tier. Tier 1 providers get priority of tenders over those who are awarded Tier 2. It was intended that this process would increase quality, however due to being focussed on price and a lack of competition it did not give the desired outcomes.

Accommodation

3.9. The existing framework does not currently specify accommodation standards. However, to uphold the quality of housing offered to individuals, we are implementing minimum accommodation standards within the new contract. These standards will ensure that properties remain safe and compliant with Supported Housing: National Statement of Expectations or REACH standards.

As the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 progresses, with consultations currently underway, it is essential that the new contract is designed to be fit for the future. For accommodation-based supported living services, the Council requires clearer oversight of the housing component, particularly where providers receive enhanced rent payments and are registered as 'specified accommodation.' Strengthening this oversight will ensure that commissioned services remain cost-effective, meet appropriate standards, and continue to address evolving needs efficiently and sustainably.

3.10. There is a lack of providers who have developed pathway models through supported living, and therefore there is a limited number of Individuals moving on from supported living into independent housing. This is something that we have consulted our current providers on, however there is little incentive for change. On average since recording voids in 2023, we have 35 voids per week in shared accommodation with a need for more self-contained units. These are required for both Individuals with complex needs, and for those who require a step down into a more independent service. Whilst we acknowledge that for some individuals, they may always require a supported living placement, through proactive contract management and monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs), we aim to motivate providers under the new contract to drive meaningful change, deliver measurable outcomes, and support individuals in achieving greater independence. This structured approach will ensure continuous improvement, accountability, and alignment with best practices in service provision.

4. The Proposal

Options Proposed

4.1. It is proposed to have an overall set of principles for the supported living market and workstreams that will support delivery of these principles. The principles will be core in

the new tender documents and will incorporate the views of people with lived experience:

Supporting the Life that Matter to You

- There is a lack of pathways through supported living services, and therefore we would aim for at least a third of people to move through supported living onto independent accommodation. Where supported living is likely to be long term, clear plans are in place to continue development and engagement in long term services

Suitable Accommodation

- Introduction of accommodation standards to ensure individuals have access to good quality accommodation that meets a person needs.

Collaboration

- Good quality providers that are person focused, imaginative, support co-production and willing to try new ways of working.

Healthy

- A market that promotes and supports good physical and mental health.

Stable staffing

- Well-trained consistent staff that can meet service users' needs even if they change. Staff levels need to be sufficient to manage the demand in addition to any packages already held. Staff should share our supported living vision and be enthused to work collaboratively with the Council to deliver efficient care and strive to achieve personal outcomes and goals with individuals.

These principles will be part of the procurement process and future KPIs as part of contract management.

4.2.   A three-year strategic workstream has been developed to ensure the principles   are implemented and that individuals receive the right support in a sustainable, good-quality, and accessible local market. During this period, learning and best practices will be continuously integrated into the contract term ensuring ongoing improvements in service delivery and will become business as usual. A key priority is to create a care system that is not only viable and affordable but also centred around the needs and aspirations of the people it serves.

To strengthen this approach, funding for a social worker and occupational therapist was secured through an MTFS business case. Working collaboratively, they will engage closely with providers to deliver enablement training, carry out TEC assessments, and conduct outcome-based reviews. Their role will be essential in taking a holistic approach to evaluating accommodation-based services, ensuring cost-effective support arrangements while also facilitating opportunities for individuals to transition to lower-needs services or general housing when appropriate. This person-centred model will enhance independence, dignity, and overall well-being for those accessing support.

When	Task
Year 1	- Recruitment 2x FTE fixed term operational posts. - Determine & agree the order in which we will roll these initiatives out across providers. - Co-produce an agreed approach for rolling out the initiatives across providers with clients and families. - Begin training providers & rolling-out a culture change with providers.

	• Researching TEC options that are best suited to shared supported living services.
Year 2	Deliver the following initiatives across all providers: • Setting outcomes for clients which providers will then work to deliver, with the aim of maximising clients' independence and reducing the amount of care they require. • Installing TEC where possible. • Conducting place-based reviews to explore cost-effective configurations of hours & night-time support within group environments.
Year 3	Complete the embedding of the new culture with the provider market, and operational teams, through: • Moving clients (who are ready) to more independent living options (based on developing a wider Supported Living Pathway into independence or services with lower-level support). • Ensuring all clients are being reviewed on a regular basis and that this learning from this is shared with wider Operational Teams and Providers (with an outcomes-focused mindset). • Ensuring contract management arrangements are holding providers to account in line with the proposed new ways of working by using the KPIs, sharing good practice and celebrating success stories, whilst holding providers to account if they are not working proactively to ensure outcomes are being met.

4.3.   We plan to utilise the use of Lots to meet the need and therefore are drafting the service specifications for:

- Lot 1 (supported living). This is an accommodation-based area of the market where the Individual would have a separate contract for their tenancy, however the property is *usually* sourced by the care provider, or the care provider is expected to have an SLA (service level agreement) with the landlord. Our contract would be with the care provider who would provide the care and support required for the individual. The accommodation is usually shared, however can also be a single dwelling. Lot 1 will have a standardised cost.
- Lot 2 (Community Support). This is where a provider does not source the accommodation, and the person already has their own accommodation. They support an Individual from their own property (this could be living with family, already holding their own tenancy, home ownership etc). The worker travels to multiple address whilst on shift and therefore is not based at one service or property. Support could be delivered within the property for tasks such as sorting through correspondence, upkeep of the property, or could be supporting outside the home for tasks such as attending appointments, activities, getting to college etc. Lot 2 will have a standardised cost.
- Lot 3 (complex). This could be either an accommodation-based service, or community-based support. However, the individual has been assessed as

having complex/challenging needs that requires a provider who is able to manage these and has a greater level of skill and knowledge. This could include additional bespoke training such as TEACCH, de-escalation, robust risk assessments, stable experienced staff, and the potential for delegated healthcare tasks. The cost model for Lot 3 has not been determined yet. We are exploring the approach other local authorities have taken which vary from quoting a price per mini tender and having a weighted score, a price range, or tiering of costs alongside a criteria.

4.4.   By introducing Lots into the new contract, Reading can ensure we have enough providers in place to meet the varying need whilst promoting choice and securing a sustainable market. For example, currently, there is one framework provider offering community support, and therefore are bidding and being awarded a high number of community packages meaning there is a lack of choice and presents a risk should the provider fail. In the last financial year, they have been awarded 90% of community packages. By having a Lot bespoke to providers offering community support (under Lot 2), it reduces the risk and possible disruption for individuals.

4.5.   We have reviewed supported living frameworks/dynamic purchasing systems commissioned by other local authorities to ascertain their approach. 5 out of the 9 authority documents reviewed evidence the use of lots, with the 5 also having a lot specifically for complex needs evidencing the demand in this area of the market. We also met with authorities to discuss opportunities to joint procure this lot, however whilst all were open to exploring this further, timelines did not align and there were differing ideas, therefore these conversations will continue but we are unable to joint commission at this time.

4.6.   Under Lot 1 (supported living), we are going to introduce minimum accommodation standards along with an onboarding process of properties to ensure providers we commission with acquire properties that meet our requirements. The responsibility of health and safety of the property currently sits with and will remain with the landlord. This new process would also include obtaining information similar to Housing colleagues working in line with the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme, therefore ensuring we have an annual gas safety certificate, electrical certificates, a copy of the tenancy, service level agreements etc. By having these processes in place, it will not only support the wellbeing of the individuals using the service but will also allow us to ensure there is an appropriate divide between the housing aspect, and care and support being delivered and that the property on offer is affordable. We are awaiting the outcome of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 consultation before designing this proposal as this could impact how this is regulated. In the meantime, we are recommending a self-assessment based model.

4.7.   The current framework has a price range that has not worked due to inflationary price rises each year of the contract and the gap between the highest and lowest paid providers increasing each year. Therefore, the decision has been made to create a standard rate as seen with other local authorities.

4.8.   The new supported living framework would include the use of a tiering system based on KPIs being met, thus driving competition and incentivising providers to deliver high quality support. KPIs will include indicators such as individuals meeting outcomes/achieving goals, health checks being completed, and bidding activity.

4.9.   We are recommending a 5 year contract with possible extensions for a further 5 years. This will allow us to collaboratively focus on innovation and continuous improvements, enhanced relationships with providers and pricing stability whilst enabling providers confidence to invest in the local market.

Additional Options Considered

4.10.   The do-nothing option would be to let the contract expire on the 31st of March 2026 and continue with only spot purchases. This would be a high risk as it would mean that each package would need to be negotiated on price and terms. There would be little control of providers entering the market and could lead to increase monitoring and quality work.

It would prevent providers having the security to invest in the area and have confidence in getting work.

4.11. This would affect market sustainability and increase the chances of providers using other local authorities rather than Reading.

4.12. Another option would be to have another contract up to 5 years; however this doesn't give providers longevity to invest in the Reading market. The proposed option allows a break point at 5 years to reflect the effectiveness and quality of the contract, and local market conditions to ensure it meets our expected outcomes.

Tender Options

4.13. Several procurement approaches were considered to determine the most effective model for commissioning services while ensuring compliance with procurement regulations.

One option considered was an open framework, which would maintain consistency with the Light Touch Regime in terms of scope, award criteria, and contractual terms. This approach requires scheduled and prescriptive reopening, allowing new providers to competitively enter the framework. However, if the framework sufficiently meets service needs, reopening may be unnecessary and could lead to an excess of providers relative to actual demand. Such an imbalance may result in inefficiencies and reduced viability for both commissioners and providers.

Another approach explored was the dynamic market framework, which introduces additional flexibilities but presents certain restrictions that could hinder the achievement of key procurement objectives. While a dynamic framework allows providers to join at any point and offers adaptability, it may impose limitations on strategic oversight and contract stability. These constraints could prevent the Council from maintaining the necessary level of control over service delivery and ensuring cost-effectiveness within the contractual arrangements

By carefully weighing these procurement models against regulatory compliance and long-term service needs, the Council has selected an approach that balances accessibility for providers with robust contract management, ensuring sustainable and high-quality service provision.

5. Contribution to Strategic Aims

5.1. The new framework will contribute to the Reading Borough Council Plan 2025-28 which sets a vision to 'to help Reading realise its potential and ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share in the benefits of its success'

5.2. One of five stated priorities in the Council Plan is to 'safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children'. An objective to achieve this is to 'support those who need social care services to live as independently as possible in their homes with improved wellbeing'.

5.3. This proposal directly supports the achievement of this priority and objective by ensuring that the service is designed to help individuals live independently at home. Through outcome-focused support, providers will implement an enablement or reablement approach that promotes positive well-being and enhances quality of life.

5.4. This proposal also links to the Council's principles; it puts residents first by prioritising their independence and current life, keeping this in place as far as possible. Residents will continue to be able to exercise choice over their support as they will continue to have a range of providers to choose from. The current and planned engagement with users of supported living services ensures that the Council will involve, collaborate with, and empower residents.

6. Environmental and Climate Implications

6.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

6.2. Environmental and Climate Change will be part of the Social Value assessment and will ask providers how they can help meet our carbon neutral target. This will include staff travel, local recruitment and measures to make accommodation-based services more energy efficient. Additionally, the new contract will have minimum accommodation standards to ensure that properties meet our expected standards.

7. Community Engagement

7.1. We are currently developing a "Working Together Supported Living Group" and have invited all individuals who are supported by providers under the current framework. We have received responses from 26 Individuals (9% of invites) who would like to join. The first group meeting took place on 15th May 2025 with 8 attendees, and we will be holding one meeting per month moving forward. This will allow us to gather feedback, along with working collaboratively on areas of the specification and contract.

In addition, we have also met with Individuals from 3 properties to discuss supported living and identify their values when discussing the services. Feedback included wanting to feel safe in their home, having similar interest to others in the property, being able to decorate bedroom, working towards goals/outcomes, feeling relaxed at home.

8. Equality Implications

8.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been initiated and will be completed prior to the tender. Is it not expected that the service design has been changed to a level that would impact, but due to the size and reach of the tender consideration will be given.

8.2. Consideration will be given to if a provider fails to get on the framework, as an agreed approach will need to be considered. This will include:

- Moving individuals from an off-framework spot provider to a on framework provider with the opportunity of Direct Payments, for those who wish to remain. This would need Operation Team to dedicate resources to complete reviews and move people as needed.

- For accommodation-based services where Reading BC purchases the care for all individuals, we would need to liaise with the landlords about seeking a new care provider. This would need legal input and Operation input to ensure reviews and support the individuals effected.

- If a provider leaves the market, then consideration will be to work with the provider to tender out all the work and TUPE staff to minimise impact to individuals.

- Continuing a contract with the provider under SPOT purchasing

9. Other Relevant Considerations

9.1. There are any no other issues to consider relevant to this report.

10. Legal Implications

10.1. Local Authorities have a duty to prevent, reduce or delay needs for care and support under The Care Act 2014 (s.2) for all adults including carers. These aspects are all covered in the tender documentation. As the contract value exceeds the applicable threshold for the Light Touch Regime, the procurement process must adhere to the competitive procurement requirements set out in the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Procurement Act 2023 to ensure compliance with regulatory obligations.

10.1. In accordance with the Council Constitution as the value of the SLF is over £500,000 per year it is a key decision, it states under 13.3.2 '*A Standing Committee may specifically delegate a key decision to an officer for them to make. In which case, the decision when taken by the officer, should be formally recorded by them*'.

10.2. Legal Services have been instructed to support with the procurement and assist with the drafting of contract documents and schedules.

10.3. The Light Touch Regime (LTR) is a procurement framework that applies to specific services, including social care, allowing for more flexible commissioning compared to standard procurement rules. While it streamlines the process, it does not reduce the importance or level of scrutiny involved; rigorous procedures are still required to ensure quality and accountability.

Given the length of the contract and the need for adaptability in responding to evolving service demands, commissioning this service under the LTR would be the most efficient approach. It provides the Council with the flexibility to design competitive tendering procedures suited to light touch contracts under the Procurement Act. This means the Council can fully utilise the new competitive flexible procedure, ensuring services meet local needs while maintaining compliance.

This approach enables the Council to manage procurement in a way that supports service continuity, innovation, and efficiency, while still maintaining high standards in care provision.

A procurement strategy has been completed and agreed by the procurement board on 13th May 2025 which discusses the different procurement options in more detail

11. Financial Implications

11.1. There are 2 Medium Term Financial Strategy business cases, Supported Living Cost of Care Pressure (DCASC-2526-05) confirming £1.527m across the financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28 to support the pressures DCASC will incur within the Supported Living market as a result of retendering the existing Supported Living framework, and an Supported Living Efficiency (DCASC-2526-06) which outlines the steps to be taken with the aspiration to fully mitigate those costs. We will work with providers on the new framework to:

- Work with clients and their families to foster a culture change within supported living (from a long-term "maintaining" environment to a more short-term, enablement-focused environment).

- Install TEC where possible.

- Conducting place-based reviews to explore cost-effective configurations of hours & night-time support within group environments.

- Training staff in re-/enablement approaches - and setting outcomes for clients which providers will then work to deliver, with the aim of maximising clients' independence and reducing the amount of care they require.

- Moving clients on to more independent living options once they are ready to do so (based on the assumption that a sufficient option can be developed as part of a wider Supported Living Pathway).

11.2. We are testing these approaches with a selected provider in 2024/25 as part of our recovery plan, as well as reviewing the highest cost supported living placements to determine the extent to which this can deliver savings. Savings to date £111k in-year / £236k full-year effect. Because the Supported Living Pressures business case is requesting £1.527m (which equates to 10% of our current spend on Supported Living), we aim to use these approaches to deliver an equivalent level of efficiencies.

	Net Change to Revenue Budget			
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
DCASC-2526-06	(376)	(575)	(576)	(1,527)

DCASC-2526-05	0	752	775	1,527
	(376)	177	199	0

11.3. The budget for the overall supported living contract is within the placements budget within Adult Social Care budgets.

12. Timetable for Implementation

12.1. Work is underway to deliver market efficiencies, improve quality of services, outcomes for individuals and oversight of the market. There is a change programme in development and savings have already been made and are expected to grow over the next 3 years of the project. This will additionally work on increasing service user voices in development of services and improve move on pathways for those who are assessed as being able to move into independent accommodation with the right support and wider network.

12.2. Procurement Timeline:

Approval at ACE Committee	2nd July 2025
Publish on InTend	10th September 2025
Evaluation & Scoring	14th October – 14th November 2025
Award	18th November – 16th December 2025
Mobilisation	13th January – 1st April 2026
Contracts	6th January – 31st March 2026
Contract Start	1st April 2026

13. Background Papers

There are none.

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Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee	Reading Borough Council *Working better with you*
02 July 2025	

Title	Home Care Framework Tender
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise, Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care
Report author	Charlie Mansfield, Commissioning Officer
Lead Councillor	Cllr Paul Gittings, Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	1. That delegated authority is granted to the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to: • Procure and enter into a contract with the successful tenderer(s) for the support / care services to be provided. The contract will be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years). • Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time, and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.

1. **Executive Summary**

1.1 The current Home Care Framework contract is due to expire on 31 March 2026 with no option to extend it further. The procurement of a new Home Care Framework is proposed to commence in September 2025, which will allow sufficient time for the procurement to be completed, plus a period of mobilisation before the new contract commences on 1st April 2026.

1.2 The current spend on Home Care is £10.2m per year, with 98% (£10.0m) of this being spent on the current framework and the remaining amount used on off-framework spot purchases. As of March 2025, 538 people receive Home Care Services; 531 via the framework and 7 off-framework.

1.3 It is proposed that the value of the new Home Care Framework would be in the region of £10.5m per annum, with a total value over the lifetime of the contract of an estimated £127.7m. This is based upon a 10 year contract with an assumed annual inflationary uplift of 2% plus a 2.2% annual growth in the care hours delivered due to increased demand.

2.   Policy Context

2.1.   Adult Social Care teams in Reading work alongside Public Health and Housing as part of the Directorate for Communities and Adult Social Care. The Directorate is responsible for meeting the Council's duties under the Care Act 2014 which places a legal duty on the Council to ensure individuals with eligible needs (as defined by this Act) receive high quality care and support services in order to adequately meet these needs. One principle of this Act links to promoting independence, preventing the escalation of care needs thus enabling people to remain in their homes.

2.2.   Section 5 of the Care Act 2014 places an additional duty on the Council to promote diversity and quality in the provision of care services. This means ensuring that service users have access to a variety of high-quality providers and sufficient information to make informed choices about their care. The Council must support care markets by fostering an environment where providers can operate efficiently and effectively, encouraging innovation and sustainability in service delivery. In addition, the Council is expected to ensure fair payment practices; balancing affordability with reasonable pay for care providers, in order to maintain a stable and high-quality market.

2.3.   In line with In Control's 'Social Care Future' vision (in-control.org.uk), our overriding ambition is to support people to realise their potential, be independent and live in their own homes for as long as possible, whilst ensuring that intensive support is available for those that need it most. The Service's 'Supporting the life that matters to you' ethos is aligned with this ambition.

2.4   The service user voice will be used to shape the specification of the contract. The Council will also ask the people with lived experience to design a question to ask tenderers as part of the tender process, co-design the contract specification, and to continue to shape the Council's home care services post contract award. A homecare-specific working group (of service users) is currently being established and subject to this there is an option for service users to assist with the scoring of the tender.

2.5   The Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS) 2021 – 2030 states 'our vision for Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham over the next ten years is that all people will live longer, healthier and more richer lives for all'. This involves reducing gaps in the differences of health outcomes between the richest and poorest parts of Berkshire West'. Six mission statements are laid out in this strategy; three most relevant to home care are that:
- Children and adults most at risk from bad health outcomes are safe and safeguarded.
- All people have the best opportunities for good mental health and wellbeing to realise their potential and connect with the community.
- All people will be able to gain access to integrated health and social care services.

2.6   This will be a central part of the proposal because it aims to enable service users to continue to live in their own home, and to delay any need for residential care services by supporting services users to retain their independence

3.   Current Position

Framework Use

3.1   The current framework has played a key part in the Council's home care service since it started operating in April 2020. It has an important role in supporting people to remain living at home in line with our 'home first' policy and reducing demand on residential placements. The framework's role in supporting hospital discharge once patients are 'medically optimised' to leave also means that it forms an essential part of the wider health and social care system.

3.2   During 2024 the Council commissioned 908 home care packages. This is higher than the 538 current service users stated in 1.2 because some packages are for a short duration (less than 12 months). Framework providers supported with 98% of these; only 1 new package was spot purchased in 2024 (for an out-of-area service) with the others being historical packages which have continued from previous years. The current framework is therefore providing for almost all of the Council's demand for home care services and the new framework will seek to replicate this. There will always be a need for a small amount of spot purchasing for exceptional reasons (such as out-of-area packages).

No of Home Care Packages Commissioned each Year

Year	Value
2020	724
2021	869
2022	808
2023	847
2024	908
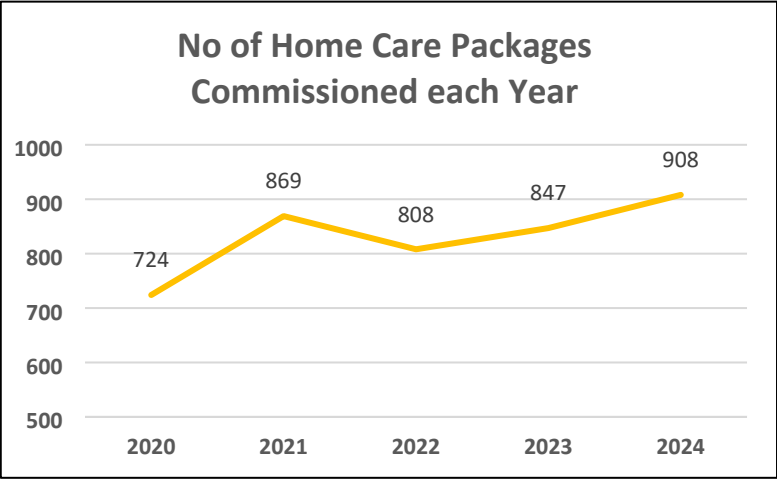
3.3   16 care providers are on the current framework: 14 actively bid to take on new packages, but the largest 5 provide support for 50% of the Council's service users. Capacity for new work is very good; evidenced by an average of 3+ bids per package and Reading-based framework providers reporting 1800 of available care hours in March 2025. The current framework has sufficient capacity to meet Council demand, with excess hours in reserve.

3.4   The most common type of need seen in the Council's home care services is for physical support. Excluding the 'not defined' type, the other types are all less than 5% each. Whilst some providers have a specialism or preference, current framework providers are expected to support all types of need. At present, all these types are sufficiently catered for and there is no necessity to commission care outside of the framework in order to support a particular need.

Primary Type of Need - Home Care 2024
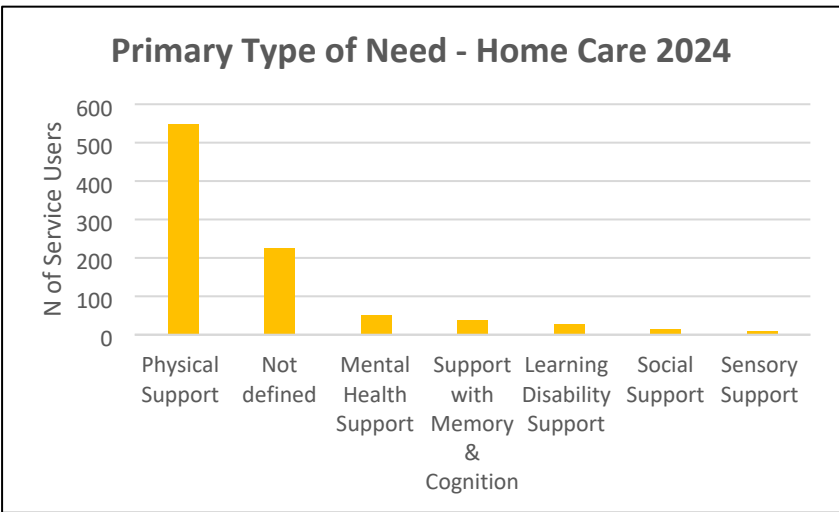
Summary of Needs Analysis

3.5   In 2024, 80% of service users receiving Council-commissioned home care were aged 65+. This split has remained consistent through the lifetime of the current framework; only varying between 80.1% and 82.5% with minimal variation year-to-year.

**2024 Home Care Framework -
Age of Service Users**

20%

80%

■ Aged 65+ ■ Aged 18-64
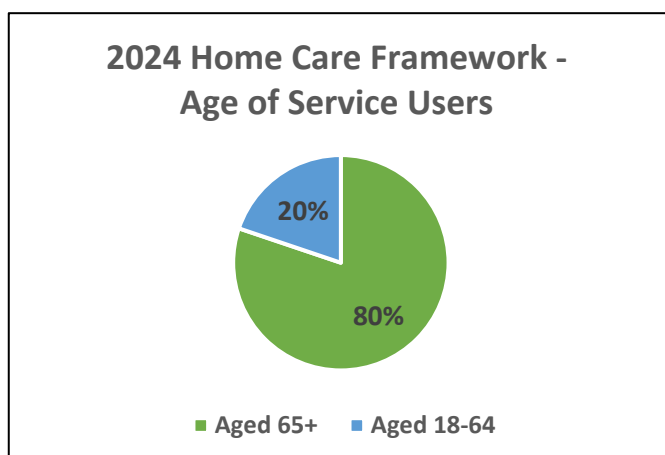
3.6   The population of older people (65+) in Reading is predicted to increase by 23% in the next 10 years from the current 2025 estimate of 22,400 up to 27,500 in 2035. The increase is due to a combination of an ageing population plus population growth. As the increase is sustained into 2040 and beyond, demand for home care services is highly likely to follow the same trajectory. As the demographics of Reading change, home care services will play an important role in supporting people to continue living at home as independently as possible, this will be key to reducing the need for residential care. An ageing population will also result in increasingly complex care packages in line with, for example, higher rates of dementia. There will be a need for home care providers to be able to support this increased complexity.

3.7   There will continue to be a need for the Council to commission home care services; this need will be long-term and so consideration should be given to the use of a long-term commissioning model. The data demonstrates a need for flexibility, and to have a level of excess capacity within the new framework in order to accommodate an increase in demand over time.

Reading Population Aged 65+
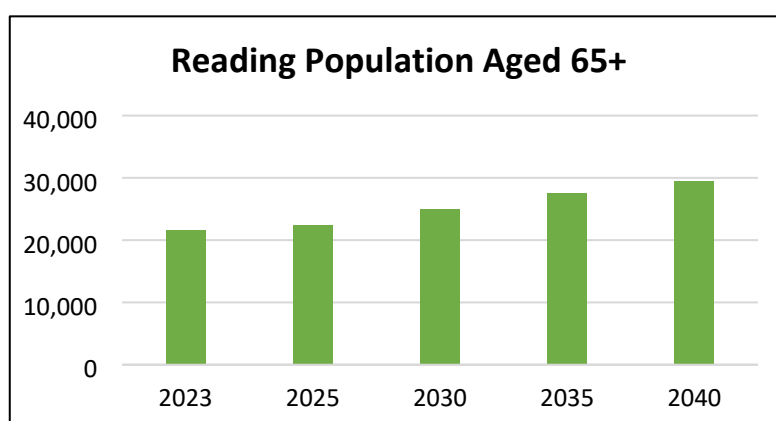
3.8   The number of people living with dementia is predicted to increase by 33.7% in Reading over the next 15 years between 2025 and 2040. This is particularly relevant to home care services because people living with this condition will often have a number of years where they require care and support, and this support can be complex and challenging to deliver. There is a need to have appropriately skilled and able providers; with this in place many people could continue to be cared for at home which in turn would reduce or remove the need for residential care.

3.9   The current (April 2025) hourly rate is £23.56. This will be the final rate paid under this framework, and it represents a 27.2% increase on the original framework rate of £18.52 in April 2020. A significant driver of this increase has been the increases to National Minimum Wage and the Real Living Wage.

3.10   In addition to this rate, the Council used monies from the DHSC Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund to support the provider market; for example, in 2022/23 to increase market capacity by funding providers to conduct international recruitment of care workers.

3.11   For the current and previous financial years, the current hourly rate benchmarks favourably when compared with the maximum hourly rate paid by the six Unitary Authorities in Berkshire.

3.12   The rate is standard for all providers irrespective of their Annual Quality Assessment (AQA) tiering (explained in 3.17), the complexity of the care, or the geographic location within the borough where the service needs to be delivered.

Year	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/26
Hourly Rate	£18.52	£19.00	£19.72	£21.72	£23.16	£23.56

3.13   The hourly rate paid throughout the lifecycle of the existing framework has been sufficient for care providers to continue to bid for work. There is a low rate of provider failure. Local Authority contracts are a majority of the work delivered by some providers, yet they have remained sustainable on our hourly rate.
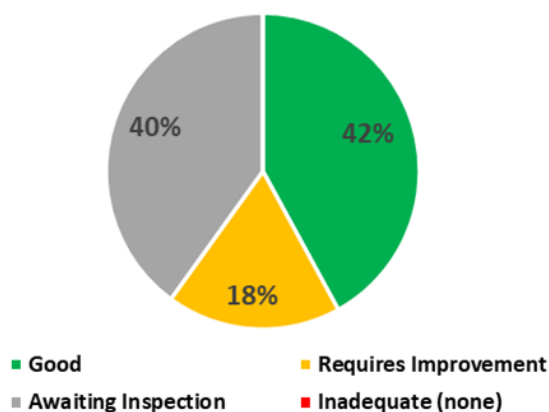
Provider Quality

3.14   The current framework has a tiering system in place where an Annual Quality Assessment (AQA) takes place to determine the providers' tier for the following year. Bids from tier 1 providers are treated with priority over tier 2.

3.15   Provider feedback on the AQA process is that they are resource intensive, and that they do not accurately capture the quality of a service. Providers also highlight the significant crossover in information between the AQA, CQC information returns, and reviews from the Council's Quality and Contracts Team.

3.16   The Proactive Quality Reviews introduced by the Quality and Contracts (Commissioning) Team in 2024 cover a majority of the AQA questions removing the need to use the AQA as part of a future framework. The reviews are proving successful, and are proposed to form a core part of quality monitoring under the new framework. It is acknowledged that this may change over the lifecycle of the new framework and, if so, the Commissioning Team would work with providers to agree a new approach to quality monitoring.

3.17   Of the 16 framework providers: 14 currently hold a 'good' CQC rating, 1 a rating of 'requires improvement' and 1 a rating of 'inadequate'. This is above the level of quality seen for home care providers in Reading as a whole:
   • 42% are rated 'good' compared to 87.5% on the framework.
   • 18% are rated 'requires improvement' compared to 6.25% on the framework.
   • 40% are 'awaiting reinspection' compared to 0% on the framework.
   • 0% (none) are rated 'inadequate' compared to 6.25% on the framework (this is one provider whose CQC registered office is located outside of Reading Borough).

3.18   The difference is partly explained by the framework providers being more established and therefore holding a rating rather than waiting for their first inspection. This data does suggest that the current framework rate continues to prove sufficient to purchase services from good quality providers.

CQC Rating - Framework Providers

6.25%
6.25%
87.5%

- Good - Requires Improvement - Inadequate
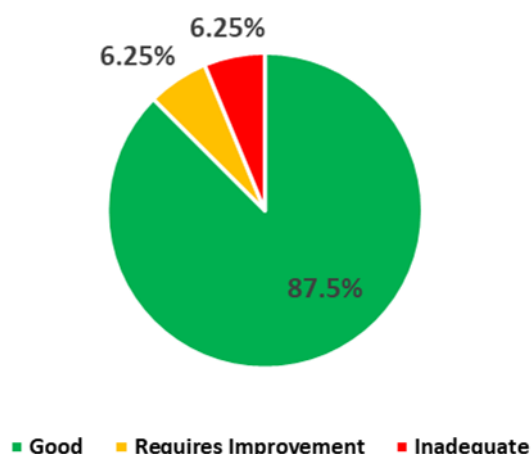
CQC Rating - Reading Borough

40%
42%
18%

- Good - Requires Improvement
- Awaiting Inspection - Inadequate (none)

4.   The Proposal

Option Proposed

4.1   To procure a new Home Care Framework using a competitive flexible procurement process under the light touch regime, to create a framework of providers able to meet all of the Council's home care needs. The light touch regime refers to a list of services, one of which is social care services, which fall under this regime and are therefore subject to different procurement rules. It should not be taken to imply that these services are low risk or of low importance; a rigorous procurement process is still required.

4.2   The single-lot framework would be a 5 year contract with the option to extend for a period or periods of up to a further 5 years. This approach gives the maximum amount of control both financially and over the market whilst still being flexible enough to allow the Council to vary the number of providers if needed.

4.3   To broker individual packages, providers will place a bid with the Brokerage Team. Similar to the current process, these bids will then be shared with the relevant worker who, together with the service user and their representatives, will pick their preferred provider. In order to pick their provider, there are some typical factors which a service user will consider such as: the start date for the care and the available time slots for their care calls. Service users and their representatives may also consider the CQC rating of a provider, and any reviews of the provider (for example online testimonials or Google reviews). This part of the process ensures service users have choice and control over their care.

4.4   Through a combination of the procurement process, KPIs, and contract documents- key aims that the new framework will seek to embed are:

- A stronger focus on reablement and enablement.
- Flexibility to evolve the service over the contract lifecycle.
- Supporting people with complex needs to continue to live at home.
- The delivery of delegated healthcare tasks (pending introduction of this).
- Ability to purchase block hours as part of the framework.
- To maintain good market capacity and low wait times.
- Ensure the sustainability of care providers on the framework.
- Mandatory use of the Mosaic Provider Portal for electronic invoicing.
- A formalised process for commissioning live-in care.

4.5   This would be a single tiered framework to reduce the amount of administration for all parties as well as the contract management required to determine a tiering system. This will mean all providers will be held to the same quality standards using contract terms,

KPIs, and Proactive Quality Reviews from the Quality and Contracts (Commissioning) Team.

4.6   Based on the outcome of the needs analysis, the new framework will seek to admit enough providers to give sufficient capacity and geographical cover to meet the Council's needs.

4.7   The proposed framework would, once formed, be closed to new providers (with Council options to reopen it if necessary). This will allow the Council to work with a relatively small number of providers, each of which would receive a sufficient volume of work to ensure their sustainability. Quality standards can be maintained more easily with a closed framework- it sets the bar high during the procurement process (as only the best providers would be successful), but it also means that effective quality and contract management can take place within existing resources.

4.8   The proposed pricing model for this framework is to offer one fixed hourly rate regardless of complexity or geographical location. This will be paid pro rata for 15, 30, and 45 minute care calls. This model is straightforward for both providers and the Council to manage. It limits the ability of providers to negotiate in-year price increases, with the option of an inflationary uplift offer to be considered once annually.

Options Considered but not Recommended

Do Nothing

4.9   If the Council were to do nothing, the framework contracts would come to an end on 31st March 2026 and the Council would then be purchasing care outside a formal contract. Key disadvantages to this are that providers would not be contractually obliged to bid for work so the Council may find it more difficult to find care providers for its service users. The Council would be at financial risk because providers could ask for hourly rate increases in an unrestricted way. There would be a significant risk of disruption to service users as providers would no longer be required to continue their support. Quality and contract management would be impacted as the rights to conduct checks come partly from the framework contracts.

Zoning & Block Contracts

4.10   The idea behind zoning would be to split the Borough geographically and award a provider or small group of providers block contracts for a certain number of hours. This option is not recommended; Reading is geographically small and is difficult to divide into zones of a similar size (in terms of care hours). Service user choice is notably restricted in this model; service users would have to use the 1 or 2 providers for their zone. The use of block / fixed hours also creates a significant financial risk to the Council in the event that these are underutilised.

A Joint West of Berkshire Framework

4.11   This was considered and explored with both Wokingham and West Berkshire Councils last year. West Berkshire were not in a position to consider a joint approach, but a joint framework between Reading and Wokingham was discussed.

4.12   This is not recommended because there is little crossover between the two authorities and the providers that each authority commissions for home care. Combining providers onto a single framework would have resulted in few benefits to the market (in terms of combined rounds) and for Reading, it would have increased the number of providers we would need to contract manage as Wokingham commission with a number of providers based in Reading that we do not currently commission with.

4.13   What Reading and Wokingham Councils will do is align contract documentation and seek to use similar contact terms. This will give care providers within our area of Berkshire a consistent approach from both Councils.

Joint Adults and Children's Home Care Framework

4.14   Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) approached Adult Social Care with a view to having a single framework where providers could be used for both adults and children's services or having a separate lot within the tender for providers of children's services.

4.15   When this idea was explored, very few of the providers used by adult social care work with children and have not had their staff checked under DBS for working with children and aren't trained in children's safeguarding. When looking at the providers used by BFfC, more than half weren't registered with CQC and therefore wouldn't meet the basic criteria for the adult framework (CQC registration is a legal requirement to deliver personal care and other regulated activity to adults). There was no appetite for those providers to be lost by BFfC, which would mean a lot of off framework spot provision, which is what they have at the moment.

4.16   Adult Social Care and BFfC will share contract documentation to try and achieve some consistency in the clauses and trading terms used in both Adults and Children's Services. This will aid future working in light of approved plans for the Council to bring BFfC back 'in house' and dissolve the Company.

Lead Provider or Master Vendor Solution

4.17   This option is a model of delivery where a single provider manages all of the provision on behalf of the Council, picking up all the work from the Council directly, and subcontracting and managing smaller providers to deliver services where they are unable to provide the services directly. There are a number of disadvantages associated with this option; principally the lack of control and oversight the Council would have over third party providers supporting service users. There are also concerns from a procurement perspective that a very restricted sourcing strategy of this nature would not allow small and medium sized enterprises to access opportunities.

5.   Contribution to Strategic Aims

5.1   The Reading Borough Council Plan 2025-28 vision is to 'to help Reading realise its potential and ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share in the benefits of its success'.

5.2   One of five stated priorities in the Council Plan is to 'safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children'. An objective to achieve this is to 'support those who need social care services to live as independently as possible in their homes with improved wellbeing'.

5.3   This proposal will help to achieve this priority and objective because the purpose of the service is specifically to support people to live at home. The stronger reablement focus will directly increase independence, and the flexible service (ranging from one care call per day up to 24/7 live-in care) means that even those with high needs can continue to live at home.

5.4   This proposal also links to the Council's principles; it puts residents first by prioritising their independence and current life, keeping this in place as far as possible. Residents will continue to be able to exercise choice over their care as they will continue to have a range of care providers to choose from. The current and planned engagement with users of home care services ensures that the Council will involve, collaborate with, and empower residents.

6.   Environmental and Climate Implications

6.1   We are limiting the impact on the climate and environment from this proposal as much as possible. Providers will have an impact on the environment as they do at present, for example staff commuting to work and then travelling between different addresses to deliver care calls. The impact is local (for example, more cars on the road in Reading) as well as impacting climate change as a whole.

6.2   This proposal will address this as part of the Social Value assessment. This is a part of the tender process where providers wishing to join the framework will be asked to demonstrate how they can help to meet the Council's carbon neutral target. For example, recruiting locally from within the Borough, using walking rounds or public transport to minimise travel and carbon footprints.

7.   Community Engagement

7.1   Market engagement work will be carried out with the Reading-based care providers as well as other providers that may be interested in bidding in the upcoming procurement. A focus group with current home care framework providers is being held on 09th June 2025. There will then be a whole-market engagement event which will be held as a large online forum and will be open to all interested care providers. Market engagement will continue over the next 9 months as part of the tender process.

7.2   Engagement with residents, service users, and carers will also be central to work being undertaken in the development of the home care framework. The intention is to develop a 'Home Care Working Together Group' to have a group of service users who can work with the Council to co-produce elements of the tender, and shape the home care service as a whole. Service users have been contacted about joining this, and a questionnaire has also been sent out to services users in the post and via care providers.

8.   Equality Implications

8.1   Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
   * eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
   * advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
   * foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2   An equality impact assessment has been started in preparation for the procurement, and is being treated as a live/active document. Risks such as the likelihood of existing providers changing as a result of not making it onto the new framework, can be mitigated and we are not expecting any individual with protected characteristics to be negatively impacted as a result of reprocuring the framework. This assessment will account for data collected as part of the needs analysis which relates to the protected characteristics of residents and service users.

9.   Other Relevant Considerations

9.1   There are any no other issues to consider relevant to this report.

10.   Legal Implications

10.1   The procured service will provide care services in line with the Care Act 2014.

10.2   Local Authorities have a duty to prevent, reduce or delay needs for care and support under The Care Act 2014 (s.2) for all adults including carers. Tender documentation will

make reference to this. This proposal upholds this duty; care at home can prevent the need for more restrictive and (often) costly residential care. Incorporation of reablement, for example, has the specific goal of reducing/delaying the need for care.

10.3 The value of the framework contract is above the relevant threshold for contracts, and requiring a competitive procurement to be run in accordance with both the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Procurement Act 2023.

10.4 In accordance with the Council Constitution, as the value of the framework is over £500,000 per year it is a key decision, it states under 13.3.2 'A Standing Committee may specifically delegate a key decision to an officer for them to make. In which case, the decision when taken by the officer, should be formally recorded by them'. Delegated authority to award the contracts following the procurement is therefore being sought from the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee.

10.5 Legal Services have been instructed to support with the procurement and assist with the drafting of contract documents and schedules.

11. Financial Implications

11.1 The value of the current home care framework is valued at around £10.2 million per annum. The proposed length of the new framework is 10 years, and with an assumed inflationary uplift of 2% plus a 2.2% annual growth in the care hours delivered due to increased demand the agreed budget has been set at £127.7 million over the framework's lifetime.

11.2 The budget for this service is funded from the main Adult Social Care physical support community care services budget. The framework requires no additional funding as the current packages of care will continue to be funded by the Council and future work has already been budgeted for.

12. Timetable for Implementation

PROCUREMENT EVENT	DATE
Dispatch of Contract Notice	• 01st September 2025
Deadline for Clarification Questions	• 26th September 2025
Deadline for receipt of ITT (Invitation to Tender)	• 03rd October 2025
Evaluation of ITT, date completed by	• 03rd November 2025
Internal Award authorisation date by	• 21st November 2025
Intention to Award Letters to all Suppliers - Winning Bidders announced. Standstill period commences.	• 01st December 2025
New Contract Starts	• 01st April 2026

13. Background Papers

There are none.

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee	Reading Borough Council Working better with you

02 July 2025

Title	Reading Youth Justice Service annual plan 2025/26 and progress on inspection improvement work
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services
Report author	Maria Young, Director Family Help & Safeguarding, BFfC Children's Services
Lead Councillor	Cllr Wendy Griffith, Lead Councillor for Children
Corporate priority	• Promote more equal communities in Reading • Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
Recommendations	1. That the Committee notes the progress of the 2025/26 Youth Justice Service annual plan and timeframes for completion. 2. That the Committee notes the progress of the Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan

1. Executive Summary

1.1. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the Local Authority to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan. The production of a plan is also a condition of the Youth Justice Board Grant. Once agreed the Plan will be published on the Reading Borough Council website.

1.2. The production and sign-off of the Plan is overseen by the multi-agency Youth Justice Partnership through the Youth Justice Management Board which is independently chaired. The structure of the Plan complies with the expectations set out by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

1.3. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) conducted an inspection of Youth Justice Services in Reading between 9th and 13th September 2024. The service was found to be inadequate. Following the publication of the HMIP inspection report in December 2024, a detailed and robust improvement plan was created, endorsed by the Youth Justice Management Board and submitted to HMIP on 20th December 2024.

1.4. The Improvement Plan sets out, in detail, how the service and partnership will address the recommendations and findings. The Plan is comprised of four pillars; Governance and Leadership, Staffing and Workforce Development, Partnership and Services; Process, Systems and Quality of Practice. Each pillar includes several actions, and sub actions and has a nominated lead to hold those responsible for delivering actions to account. Leads are each supported by a nominated Board sponsor, from one of the statutory partners.

2. Policy Context

2.1. The Annual Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requiring the local authority to publish a plan on an annual basis. The plan contributes to the strategic theme o promote more equal communities in Reading and safeguard and

support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children, as set out in the Corporate Plan.

2.2. HM Chief Inspector of Probation's responsibilities are set out in Section 7 of the *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)*, as amended by the *Offender Management Act (2007)*, section 12(3)(a). This requires the Chief Inspector to inspect (section 1) and report to the Secretary of State (section 3) on the arrangements for the provision of probation services.

2.3. Under Section 7(6) of the *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)*, HM Chief Inspector of Probation is also conferred to inspect and report on Youth Justice Teams, established under section 39 of the *Crime and Disorder Act (1998)*, and bodies acting on their behalf.

3. The Proposal

3.1. This year's Youth Justice Annual Plan is currently being updated ahead of the deadline of 30th June for submission to the Youth Justice Board and is on track with the forward plan for completion.

3.2. Performance updates on the Plan are dependent on the available performance data 'youth data summary', published by the Youth Justice Board released on 06 June 2025.

3.3. Although finalised performance data will not be published by the Youth Justice Board until 06 June, draft data shared with Youth Justice Services indicates a significant improvement in performance by the YJS across all 3 national outcome indicators:

- In 2024-25, 27 children became first time entrants, a 27% reduction on the number in the previous year which was 37. This is a significant reduction which means that the rate of children entering the youth justice system for the first time in Reading is now broadly in line with that for the Southeast, YJS comparison group and the National rate. The rate remains above that for the Thames Valley. This demonstrates that we are starting to see impact following the implementation of the Out of Court disposal Joint Decision-making panel, the Turnaround project and other diversionary initiatives. The launch of Youth Diversionary Disposals (Outcome 22) by Thames Valley Police, following challenge from the Youth Justice Management Board and from YJS's across Thames Valley, will further assist the work of the YJS in this area in 2025-26 and beyond.

- We have also seen a significant reduction in the number of children reoffending in the most recently available 12-month period. 28% of children reoffended in the 12-month period to June 2023, a 7.5% reduction from the rate in the 12 months to June 22. In actual numbers this represents a reduction from 21 children reoffending to 16. The number of reoffences per child who has reoffended also reduced significantly in the same period from 4.9 to 2.6, a 46.5% reduction. Again, this indicates that we are starting to see the impact of developing the effectiveness of interventions following child first, identity development and trauma informed practice as well as the strong partnership work led through the YJMB.

- The rate of custodial sentences has also reduced from 0.12 per 1000 of the 10–17-year-old population for 2023-24 to 0 for the 12 month period to March 25, meaning there were no custodial sentence in this period. There were also no children Remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation in the period. Again, this indicates that we are starting to see the impact of the hard work of the YJS in supporting some of our children with the most complex needs as well as the strong partnership work in this area.

3.4. There is a Youth Justice annual plan formulation workshop scheduled for 04 June 2025 with the full Youth Justice Board where all agencies contribute to the development of the plan.

3.5. The Youth Justice annual plan is on the forward plan for the youth justice management board on 26 June 2025, where the plan will be signed off.

3.6. The deadline for submission to the Youth Justice Board is 30th June 2025.

3.7. Ordinarily the Youth Justice Service and partnership would agree and set out, in the plan, a set of strategic objectives and actions. The proposal this year will be for the continuation of

the same set of overarching objectives from the 2024/25 plan:

- Reducing First Time Entrants
- Reducing Reoffending
- Reducing the use of custody
- Reducing ethnic disproportionality
- Reducing Serious Youth Violence
- Embedding Child First and Identity Development Practice as the practice model across the partnership
- Improving outcomes for victims of youth crime

3.8. Within the HMIP Inspection improvement plan, the service and partnership have set out a robust set of targets. Given the close alignment of these actions with the strategic priorities set out above, the proposal is to retain the HMIP improvement plan as the operational set of targets for the service for 2025/26, rather than create two separate plans, and ensure this is reviewed to include any further developmental work needed.

3.9. The below update contains a high-level summary of overall progress so far against actions within the HMIP Improvement Plan. This update does not cover every action contained within the plan but instead focuses on progress against key elements for each pillar in the plan. The four pillars and progress against these are:

Governance and Leadership:

- A more refined, service specific performance report has been created to include KPI data which uses more sophisticated software as well as additional local caseload data and Thames Valley wide data. This enables partners to have greater scrutiny of performance data.

- Additional Local performance data is to be included from June 25 which will support partners to have greater understanding of the profile and characteristics of children supported by the YJS

- SAFE Young Victims Service have committed to being part of Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) moving forward and to support in recruitment of the Restorative Justice Officer. This will support the service as it's aims to increase focus on supporting victims.

- The Restorative Justice Officer job description has been re-evaluated in line with new inspection standards and recruitment to the role is due to start shortly.

- The Head of Education, Head of SEND and Service Manager for YJS have met with the management team from Cranbury College (PRU) to provide assurance regarding educational outcomes for the YJS cohort. Regular meetings will continue each half term. The positive OFSTED inspection outcome for Cranbury College indicates progress in the work they are delivering to support vulnerable children.

- The new Head of SEND is now part of YJMB, increasing the focus on the cohort of children being supported by the YJS who have special educational needs and disabilities.

- Discussions have been started with the Principle Educational Psychologist regarding input into the YJS. This is likely to require a relatively small amount of funding from the YJS pooled budget, which will be contained within the current budget allocated for 2025/26.

- The Service has continued to deliver work to address ethnic disproportionality. An audit of disparity in sentencing outcomes has been completed. Themes will be shared with The Youth Justice Management Board in June 25. Anti-racist practice training has been organised for the team and will be delivered in July 25. A disproportionality statement has been added to Pre-sentence reports which sets out the position of the service regarding ethnic disproportionality.

Staffing and Workforce Development:

- The YJS has been successful in recruiting into three vacant practitioner posts (2 x Case Workers and 1 x Transitions Officer). All are qualified Probation Officers which is a major success following the inspection feedback and lack of qualified practitioners within the workforce. The Transitions Officer is an experienced, qualified Probation Officer with Youth Justice experience and has started in post.

- One case worker is being supported via the apprenticeship programme to undertake the Youth Justice Degree, the Youth Justice qualification recognised by the Youth Justice Board (YJB).

- Ministry of Justice (MoJ) funding to support the Turnaround Programme has been extended to 2025/26, albeit at a 50% reduction. This will fund one worker for another year to deliver prevention activity. Quarterly performance data indicates that there has been a reduction in the rate of children becoming first time entrants which demonstrates the effectiveness of the prevention work delivered via the Turnaround programme, as well as other prevention work.

- A review of all open cases was carried out post inspection to provide assurances regarding practice and safety of children. Themes were taken to a session with managers to develop a shared understanding of risk, and planning. This informed a subsequent review of Quality Assurance documents which are now in operation.

- An away day held with staff focused on operationalising the Child First Framework and how to balance this against robust risk management.

- Refresher Child First training has been delivered to 7 case workers and managers. Mop up training will be delivered to the 3 remaining staff who missed these sessions through absence.

- Additional training is being explored through a trusted external provider to deliver 2 'psychoeducation' team workshops on risk assessment (1 day duration each workshop) and risk management 'theory into practice' team workshop (1 day duration).

- Additionally, the team are also exploring full Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) training. Contact has been made with forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services regarding delivery which has been agreed and a date being set for Summer 2025.

- The Service Manager has worked with the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) coordinator for Thames Valley to organise a training package for YJSs across the region for 25/26 to support and enhance understanding of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. This is now operational and will be delivered annually. At the time of writing 6 staff from Reading YJS have attended this training with 42 delegates attending overall from across the Thames Valley. There is one further session being delivered this spring.

Partnership and Services:

- A new process has been formalised and implemented for screening children and referring those who are identified as at risk regarding substance misuse to the Reconnect Team who deliver work with children and families at risk of extra-familial harm and substance misuse.

- The Act Now project has been launched to support children in Police custody for weapons or violent offences. It is being delivered by Reading FC Community Trust on behalf of the YJS. A report on impact will be available at the end of the project. So far, the project has supported 13 children in custody and is delivering ongoing intervention with 6.

Processes Systems and Quality of Practice:

- A comprehensive set of practice standards has been agreed with managers. This led to the creation of a framework for managing local performance which is being monitored by managers in fortnightly performance meetings.

- The YJS now tracks local performance against an agreed set of practice standards. This will be reported to the Youth Justice Management Board via a performance dashboard

from June onwards, enabling board members to have more detailed understanding of the performance of the service.

- A New Quality Assurance template has been launched which incorporates learning from the HMIP inspection as well as the new HMIP framework. This forms part of an overarching Quality Assurance Framework document that also includes the approach to case and thematic audits and management oversight. This document is in the development phase.

- Guidance has been developed for managers to support their oversight of case work. The recently launched local performance framework includes tracking of oversight of the delivery of regular management oversight. This will be reported to the Youth Justice Management Board quarterly via performance reports.

4.   Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. The improvement work contributes to the theme of "Promote more equal communities in Reading" and "Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children" as set out in the Council Plan. It does this by delivering essential improvements to the quality of Youth Justice work in Reading.

5.   Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. There are no environmental or climate implications linked to the Youth Justice inspection or improvement plan.

6.   Community Engagement

6.1. Feedback from young people, parents, victims and partner agencies will be used to inform the Plan and priorities for the year ahead. The recent establishment of a 'Young People's Board' in April 2025 within the service is the first major step to our commitment for the voice of young people and victims to shape and determine the future of this service.

6.2. As a routine part of the inspection process inspectors sought feedback from children and families about the service they had received. Feedback was universally positive.

7.   Equality Implications

7.1. Addressing disproportionality within the criminal justice system is one of the priorities for the Youth Justice Service and partnership as outlined in the Annual Youth Justice Plan 2024/25. One of the recommendations in the HMIP inspection report was to ensure that the disproportionality action plan is being implemented effectively across the partnership. This will continue to be a priority for the year ahead with renewed focus on impact and outcomes for children

8.   Other Implications

8.1. Following the inspection outcome, the Youth Justice Service has moved to quadrant 3 of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) 4 quadrant oversight framework. The criteria for this are that there is an identified improvement need or concern and that the service is considered a 'priority service'. The classification enables the Youth Justice Board to undertake focused engagement at a service level (or across regional statutory and/or delivery partners) and, where appropriate, provide support on their improvement journey. De-escalation from quadrants 3 and/or 4 can only be achieved through meeting the agreed exit criteria. These criteria will be defined through engagement with the Youth Justice Board and the Youth Justice Service.

8.2. Within the quarterly review meeting held in June, the YJB Oversight Manager was encouraged by the progress that has been made in response to inspection, noted the significant improvement in performance in 2024-35 compared to 2023-24 and indicated that the service is on course to move from quadrant 3 to quadrant 2.

9. Legal Implications

9.1. The publication of the Plan will fulfil Reading Borough Council's legal responsibilities in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

9.2. The provision of a multi-agency Youth Justice Service by Reading Borough Council in partnership with the National Probation Service, Clinical Commissioning Group and Thames Valley Police ensures we are compliant with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

10. Financial Implications

10.1. The Youth Justice Plan will set out the financial contributions from the relevant statutory partners, which is determined at a local level and is expected to continue in line with the financial envelope of 2024/25. The Youth Justice Board contribution (the national contribution) is based on a national funding formula and has been confirmed as £324,156 for 2025/26, a small increase from £319,498.

10.2. One of the recommendations from inspection was for The Reading Youth Justice Service Management Board to ensure the Youth Justice Service is both sufficiently resourced and structured to facilitate the delivery of high quality interventions to both children and victims of crime. The service establishment is sufficient to undertake statutory roles and therefore the resources identified are adequate to respond to the learning from the inspection with any vacant posts having approval to recruit.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. 04 June 2025 Youth Justice Management Board workshop for partner agency contribution to the annual plan 2025/26

11.2. 06 June 2025 Youth Justice Board 'Youth data summary' published.

11.3. 19 June, draft plan is shared with partners

11.4. 25 June, draft plan is available for Councillors.

11.5. 26 June 2025 Youth Justice Management Board sign off plan having already had oversight.

11.6. 30 June 2025 Youth Justice Board submission date.

11.7. 14 October 2025 Youth Justice Plan to be presented to Council.

12. Appendices:

12.1. HMIP Justice Improvement Plan

Reading YJS HMIP Action Plan – December 2024.

Reading Youth Justice Service was inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in September 2024. The overall outcome was Inadequate. The following recommendations were made:

The Reading Youth Justice Service manager should:

1. ensure that quality assurance arrangements, oversight of practice, and supervision arrangements consistently support staff and volunteer development

2. ensure that assessing activity always considers how best to achieve safety for the child and the community

3. ensure that planning activity is comprehensive and that it aligns effectively with activity undertaken by other services, including the consideration of appropriate contingency arrangements.

4. ensure that staff consistently liaise with all relevant services when delivering interventions

5. ensure that commensurate focus is given to the needs of victims.

The Reading Youth Justice Management Board should:

6. ensure that the YJS is both sufficiently resourced and structured to facilitate the delivery of high-quality interventions for children and the victims of crime

7. assure itself that the disproportionality action plan is being used effectively across the partnership to enhance equity, inclusion, and diversity arrangements

8. work together to ensure that children have access to, and can engage with, high-quality, aspirational education, training, and employment opportunities.

The following plan sets out how the service and partnership will meet these recommendations. The plan is comprised of 4 pillars; Governance and Leadership, Staffing and Workforce Development, Partnership and Services; Process, Systems and Quality of Practice. Each pillar will include a number of actions and sub actions and have a nominated lead whose role it is to hold those responsible for delivering actions to account. Leads will each be supported by a nominated board sponsor, from one of the statutory partners. The role of board sponsors is to support lead's in ensuring progress against actions and to assist with accessing support from partner agencies. Operational staff from the YJS and partner agencies will also be involved in the delivery of specific actions. Each pillar of work will be coordinated by sub-groups that will report to the YJS Management Board. Sub groups will use the following report to ensure the board is assured of progress against actions:

Improvement plan
sub group report.d

This plan is also designed to prepare the YJS and partnership for the new HMIP inspection framework by placing increased emphasis on the role of the partnership in supporting high quality practice, more emphasis on support for victims both operationally and strategically, the role of the board in ensuring the delivery of good outcomes for children and ensuring high quality practice is delivered, irrespective of the level of youth justice outcome. The plan is co-produced by members of the Youth Justice Management Board.

Governance and Leadership

Lead: Michael O'Connor, Independent Board Chair

Board Sponsor: Fiona Hostler, Head of Education Access and Support

Sub Group: Michael O'Connor, Fiona Hostler, Ollie Foxell, Laura Mitchell

Action/*What do we need to do*	What did HMIP find/*Why do we need to do it*	Lead/*Who will be responsible for delivery*	Timescale/*When will we do it*	Measures/*How will we do it*	Quality Assurance/*Know – how will we know it is done.*	BRAG
1. Ensure board members are clear on their roles and responsibilities	*The management board needs to commit to embedding the changes it has started to make and continue the progress made.*	Head of Service/Board members	June 2025	• Board induction is reviewed and relaunched at away day with board. • Chair engagement meeting with new members	*e.g. progress is evidenced via board attendance, audit work and board papers.*	
2. Develop Performance report to ensure Board can respond to the needs of the cohort	*Areas of focus missing from performance report – e.g. victim work, substance misuse, mental health*	Service Manager and YJS performance lead	March 2025	• Development of performance report to include: • all KPI data are included and • richer/granular data sets provided to allow scrutiny of performance • Local performance measures • Timescales from offence to outcome	*e.g. Clear evidence of data informing Board decision making regarding operational practice and resources – evidenced via board papers and minutes.* *The performance report has been reviewed to include KPI data using power BI as well as additional local data and Thames Valley wide data on timescales to outcome.* *Local performance data will be included from March 25.*	

3. Develop audit framework and audit lead to ensure consistency	*Outcomes from review of audits were inconsistent*	YJS Performance Lead/Operational Manager	Jan 2025	• Develop QA and Performance Framework • Review audit programme to ensure all audit outcomes are delivered to YJMB, Case and thematic. • Complete benchmarking exercise to ensure shared understanding of good and outstanding practice • Review audits to ensure board member involvement • Ensure audit framework is consistent with new HMIP framework	*e.g. progress is evidenced via the outcomes of audit which impact positively on practice.* *March 25 – update.* *New QA template created for AssetPlus and launched with the team. PDT QA tool is in progress.* *QA framework document will be created including audit.* *Audits – OF created thematic audit schedule. Need to create for regular audits – 1 case per manager per month.* *All outcomes and themes will go to board twice per year as 1 collated quality report, combining themes from regular case audits, thematic, QA and other qualitative work.*	
4. Enhance operational involvement and leadership to address disproportionality	*Partnership staff were not aware of disproportionality action plan*	Board members	March 2025	• Ensure disproportionality action plan discussed at least annually as a	*e.g. disproportionality plan is being delivered and impact evidenced via positive impact on disproportionality measures*	

Page 201					dedicated, focused board item • Board members to take ownership for communicating the plan within their organisations • Events held for partnership staff celebrating diversity and global majority leaders. • Evidence of impact for individual children from black and global majority/GRT backgrounds	*Audit of disparity in outcomes has been completed. Themes will be shared with board.*	
5. Ensure there is a strategic and operational lead for victims	*The voice of victims is not heard at board*	Service Manager/Performance lead.	June 2025	• Victim data to be prioritised in performance report • Granular analysis of victim demographic and needs to ensure sufficient response • Audit of victim work • Explore victim representation on board	*e.g. the voice of victims is heard at board via strategic representation but also clear oversight of operational work to support victims.* *SAFE have committed to being part of YJMB moving forward and supporting in recruitment of RJ Officer.*	

					RJ Officer role re-evaluated in line with new inspection standards.	
6. Further workforce development for Board and Operational staff to ensure Child First and Evidence based practice is embedded across all interventions with children	*Management team has been unsuccessful in operationalising child first vision and balancing against management of risk/safety and well-being*	Independent Board Chair/Service Manager	March 2025	• Staff and managers to attend additional child first training with focus on how this sits alongside robust risk/Safety management • Managers and staff to hold a follow up session to the training to ensure consistent understanding of key messages • Further workshops offered for board members for operationalising child first	*Staff and managers have attended additional training on Child First practice.* *Away day held with staff focusing on operationalising the Child First framework and how to balance this against robust risk management.* *This in turn fed in to the review of the QA template.*	
7. Board education leads to develop further the effective educational engagement pathways for children open to the YJS in insufficient educational settings	*The board has been unsuccessful in tackling structural barriers, e.g. education provision*	Head of Education/SEN Lead/Operational Manager	September 2025	• Embed educational triage procedures for children when they enter the YJS, and ensure any child with a RAG rating of RED rating to benefit from a PEP review each half term.	*Head of Education, Head of SEND and Service Manager for YJS have met with the Management Team from Cranberry College to ensure assurance regarding educational outcomes for the YJS cohort.*	

				Actions	Progress	
				• Create and embed a monitoring process to ensure that the length of time children are in unsuitable education reduces over time and there is an increase in children in suitable and effective provision • Post-inspection review with Cranbury College to ensure assurance on educational outcomes for children open to the YJS • Review of educational pathways for children open to YJS ongoing, including assessment elements across agencies, • Review of SEND strategy to ensure YJS cohort and adolescent risk is clearly identified and responded to within the partnership with clear means of monitoring impact	*New Head of SEND is now part of YJMB.* *Discussions have been started with Principle Educational Psychologist regarding EPS input to YJS.*	
8. Ensure YJS risks are understood and	*There is not a universal*	Independent Board Chair	March 2025	• Risk register as standing item on board agenda	*Risk register is updated and now standing item at YJMB.*	

communicated to Board members and operational managers across the partnership	*understanding of risks to the organisation across the partnership*			• Board members to own specific risks and evidence to the Board progress against these	
9. Board members to deliver one report each within the next 12 months to the YJS Board relating to the YJS cohort and what their organisation is doing to improve outcomes and meet the needs of children and victims in the cohort	*Board members need to ensure there is a clear focus on YJ children in the work they do at board and the data they bring for scrutiny*	Board members	March 2025	• Review of partnership data presented to board to ensure this is relevant to children in the Youth Justice system • Review of Forward plan/calendar of assurance and agreement of Board member schedule for reports and progress to Board • Development of YJMB board report proforma to ask questions related to the impact on the work to drive improvements in the priorities embedded in the YJS plan	

Staffing and Workforce Development

Lead: Lisa Bursill, Interim Transformation lead Brighter Futures for Children

Board sponsor: Chantal Foster, Head of Probation Delivery Unit, West Berkshire

Sub Group: Lisa Bursill, Chantal Foster, Ollie Foxell, Jonny Bradish

Action/*What*	What did HMIP find/*Why*	Lead/*Who*	Timescale/*When*	Measures/*How*	Quality Assurance/Know	BRAG
10. Review of the YJS structure and assurance from Brighter Futures Leaders for agreed action and investment to staffing and recruitment	*Staffing arrangements are not conducive to delivering high quality interventions, and the absence of staff with a professional qualification impacts on service delivery*	Head of Service/Service Manager	September 2025	• The service will recruit at least 2 professionally qualified staff • Review of structures to ensure high quality delivery	*3 x professionally qualified staff have been recruited .*	
11. Agreement to recruit to vacant posts and to support growth investment from across the partnership to deliver high quality YJS services	*Staffing levels are not sufficient*	Service Manager	March 2025	• Recruitment to 2 x vacant case worker posts • Explore potential to deliver prevention work once fully staffed, tying in with action on Youth Justice Plan	*2 x case workers successfully recruited and are awaiting onboarding. Both qualified probation officers.* *Turnaround funding for 25/26 has been confirmed to fund 1 worker for another year.*	
12. Agreement to recruit to vacant posts and to support growth investment from across the partnership to deliver high quality YJS services	*Service delivery has been impacted by the lack of the Probation officer*	Service Manager	March 2025	• Recruitment to Transitions Officer post • Transitions Officer to have access to n-delius and deliver the tasks a seconded Probation Officer would.	*Transitions Officer has been successfully recruited. An experienced, Qualified Probation Officer with Youth Justice experience.*	
13. Agreement to recruit to vacant posts and to support growth investment from across the partnership to deliver high quality YJS	*Current arrangements for victim work and RJ are not appropriate or sustainable*	Service Manager	March 2025	• Recruitment to vacant victim worker post • JD for post is	*Authorisation has been granted to recruit to the vacant Restorative Justice Officer role and the JD has been reviewed in line with*	.

				placements to ensure they are consistent with child first principles and support identity development	
14. Create a dedicated workforce development strategy for the YJS team and partnership. Including Board development	*Workforce development plans are under-developed*	Head of Service/Service manager	September 2025	• Creation of workforce development strategy • Practitioners to each have a career progression plan including offering Youth Justice Degree and YJ certificate in effective practice • Review case worker JD to allow career progression to grade 7. • Managers – AYM Aspiring Future Leaders Programme • YJ apprenticeship for grade 5 case workers	*Caseworker JD has been reviewed providing career progression to a newly created senior practitioner level.* *1 existing case worker has been supported via the apprenticeship programme to start the Youth Justice degree.*	

				• Explore the feasibility of a student pathway • Workforce development strategy to include volunteers	
15. Asset plus and risk assessment/Management training to be completed and embedded into process and practice	*The service urgently needs to re-visit Asset-Plus training. Inspectors found an overly rigid approach to assessing risk*	Service Manager	September 2025	• Comprehensive risk assessment and risk management training to be delivered to front line practitioners. • Managers to ensure regular risk benchmarking delivers a clear and consistent understanding of risk • Practitioners to attend Child First training specifically addressing delivery of Child First vs robust risk management • Transitions Officer role to include regular workshops on risk delivered to staff	*Risk benchmarking – all cases audited post inspection. Themes were taken to session with managers to ensure shared understanding of risk, planning – specifically external controls – and what good risk management looks like. Also fed in to review of QA doc. Managers meet every 6 weeks to look at 1 cases to benchmark understanding of risk.* *Child first training – all but 2 x case workers and ops managers have done the child first training. OF is exploring spaces on CF consultancy training to CSPOA*

Wright Link Training have offered a comprehensive training packages covering the following, for the sub group to consider:

- *2 x 'psychoeducation' team workshops (1 day duration each workshop)*
- *Trauma informed practice and case formulation 'theory into practice' team workshops (3 days duration)*

- *Risk management 'theory into practice' team workshop (1 day duration)*
- *Intervention planning: 'theory into practice' team workshop (1 day duration)*

- *Reflective practice: 'theory into practice' group support workshop (half-day / 1 day duration)*

					Additionally the team are also exploring full SAVRY training. Contact has been made with forensic CAMHS regarding this. *As part of role on Thames Valley MAPPA strategic management board, Service Manager has worked with the MAPPA coordinator to organise a training package for YJSs across Thames Valley for 25/26.*	
16. Develop practice standards and framework for measuring local performance'.	*Management oversight needs to consistently support high quality assessment, planning, and delivery of interventions*	Service Manager	January 2025	• Agreed set of practice standards reported on monthly, which includes management oversight – • Management oversight guidance is reviewed to include clear guidance on quality alongside a standardised template	*Practice standards agreed with managers. Framework for managing local performance in line with this has been created and is being monitored by managers in fortnightly performance meetings.* *The mechanism for reporting local data to board in is progress with a view to being presented to June board.*	

					Management oversight guidance has been reviewed and agreed with managers. Next steps- monitoring of MO frequency to be included in local performance.	
17. Ensure the staffing structure has a clear lead for volunteers and volunteer training and development is included in the workforce development strategy	*Volunteers receive no systematic ongoing support once they have been inducted*	Operational Manager	March 2025	• Review of supervision arrangements for volunteers – regular meetings including development opportunities • Volunteers invited to team meetings • Workforce development strategy to include volunteers	*Agreed RJ Officer will hold responsibility for this once in post.*	
18. Implement improvements to practice around equity diversity and inclusion and ensure these are embedded in to practice.	*Practice around equity, diversity and inclusion was not consistent- there were instances of interpreters not being used and inconsistent*	Operational Manager	March 2025	• Anti-racism and allyship training planned for 2025. • QA forms to include this as a specific question relating to equality act and protected characteristics	*Anti-racism training pushed back to June to ensure new staff can access it.* *The reviewed AssetPlus QA template included checks for ethnicity.*	

	recording of ethnicity					

Partnerships and services

Lead: Jonny Bradish, Head of Family Help and Partnerships

Board Sponsor: Vivienne Okoh, Health

Sub group: Jonny Bradish, Vivienne Okoh, Liudmilla Knowles/Matt Prouse, Jason Murphy.

Action/*What*	What did HMIP find/*Why*	Lead/*Who*	Timescale/*When*	Measures/*How*	Quality Assurance/Know	BRAG
19. Ensure Reconnect drugs worker is dedicated to the YJS cohort and offers routine screening and assessment for any child who identifies as using alcohol, illicit substances, cigarettes/vapes	*Substance misuse referrals are not consistently being made*	Operational Manager	March 2025	• Develop working agreement with Reconnect on substance misuse referrals in addition to those who receive DDS • Identify 1 Reconnect worker to deliver this work	*New process formalised for screening children and referring those who are identified as at tier 3 to Reconnect.*	
20. Ensure that all YJS children have access to all services that are required to meet their needs and improve outcomes	*Children can not access partnership interventions in all cases*	Operational Manager/Team Manager CAMHS	January 2025	• Review of process for referral to health interventions • Review of strategic needs analysis and comparison of offer to meet each need. Any gaps must be addressed by the Board with regard to resource investment and growth	Service Manager is part of ongoing review of the Health and justice Offer.	
21. Ensure effective escalation and challenge where children have not received an effective response from Children's Social Care	*There needs to be more consistent, effective challenge where children have not received an adequate response from*	Head of Service/Service Manager	May 2025	• Escalation and challenge to be given a dedicated field in CV and monitored in line with management oversight and		

22. Develop new multi-agency risk management panel to review and sign off high and very high risk/safety and well-being and contingency plans	*Children's Social Care*			- supervision frequency. - Review of escalation process/protocol with children's social care. - Joint audit work to be developed. - Review of Management oversight framework - Joint supervision to be developed - Multi-agency Risk Management Panel		
23. Implement the ACT now programme 24. YJS to consider EH Lead on Board and EH strategy focus on preventing offending behaviour	*The service needs to strengthen the approach for intervention for children upstream at 'reachable moments'.*	Service Manager	February 2025	- Deliver the Act Now programme - YJS to consider EH Lead on Board and EH strategy focus on preventing offending behaviour	Act Now has been launched and is fully Operational. It is being delivered by Reading FC Community Trust. A report on impact will be available at the end of the project.	
25. Ensure interventions are within a trauma informed and child first environment of the YJS. 26. Ensure police led interventions are focused on	*Seconded Police Officer interventions being delivered at Police station*	Operational Manager	February 2025	Formal agreement with TVP that interventions will be delivered within the YJS environment.		

addressing presenting risk, but also provide opportunities for strengths based and future focused work				• Review of interventions delivered by YJS police Officer in line with Stay True to You principles	

Process, Systems and Quality of Practice

Lead: Maria Young, Director of Children's Social Care

Board Sponsor: Youth Justice, Thames Valley Police

Sub-Group: Maria Young, Ollie Foxell, Emma Thompkins, Fiona Betts

Action/*What*	What did HMIP find/*Why*	Lead/*Who*	Timescale/*When*	Measures/*How*	Quality Assurance/Know	BRAG
Create schedule of policies for review managed within performance meeting	*Policies are not consistently updated*	Operational Manager/Performance Lead	February 2025	• Create schedule of policies for review managed within performance meeting • Priorities to develop a sentence planning process for multi-agency case formulation and planning of interventions and	*This has not yet been started.* *Multi-agency case formulation process is in the planning phase. Initial conversations have happened with CAMHS colleagues and there is an in principle commitment to support with delivery.*	

				review of risk and safety management policy and procedures to ensure multi-agency approach to risk management and risk/safety and contingency planning		
Develop a bespoke EDI policy for the YJS and ensure EDI is cross cutting across all refreshed policies	*Policies do not consistently support equity, diversity and inclusion*	Head of Service/Service manager	February 2025	• Develop EDI policy • Identify key policies for review	*This has not yet been created.*	
Board to support growth and investment in a dedicated data and performance Lead	*More resource for data analysis would allow greater assurance of data integrity and sophistication of analysis*	Head of Service/Service Manager	March 2025	• Develop options to allow greater resources to support with data analysis including dedicated performance analyst		
Develop performance dashboard relating to practice standards and timescales Develop weekly 'data day' for staff to understand work requiring action and prioritisation	*A number of findings demonstrated the need for increased management 'grip' on practice standards and performance*	Service Manager	April 2025	• Agree local practice standards • Create set of local performance measures	*Check against similar action in pillar 1.* *Local practice standards have been created and launched with managers.*	

				• Development of 'data day' process • Creation of caseload list and monthly caseload report • Managers meet weekly to review performance	*Fortnightly local performance meetings are being delivered.* *Reporting on local performance data will happen for June board.* *'Data day' process still to be set up.*	
Develop QA framework	*QA framework application needs to be strengthened*	Service Manager	January 2025	• Review the current Quality assurance framework against key findings from HMIP report • Review and update QA tools ensuring consistency across Court and OOC assessments. • Review management oversight guidance and template for management oversight.	*New QA template has been launched for AssetPlus cases* *Out of Court assessment template is in progress. This will follow a similar format and process.* *Management oversight guidance has been reviewed and relaunched.*	
Police to lead a review on timescales from arrest to decision making and seek to improve processes and timescales for children	*The timeliness of Out of Court decision making needs to improve*	Detective Inspector, Youth Justice Unit.	March 2025	• Performance report to include data on length of time from offence to outcome	*Performance report now includes data ion timescales from arrest to outcome,*	

				• TVP to provide report on timescales for board • Performance dashboard to include assessment and QA timescales.	*comparing data across Thames Valley.*	
Police and YJS to lead a detailed analysis of the OOCD cohort and ensure victim consent and completion rates for children with OOCDs is reviewed and understood	*Performance data on out of Court Disposals lacks depth.* *Analysis of Out of Court disposal data is under-developed – e.g. the partnership lacked clarity on victim consent levels and engagements with community resolutions.*	Detective Inspector, Youth Justice Unit. Service manager	March 2025	Performance report for board to include: • Victim consent levels • Engagement with community resolutions • Background data on children becoming FTE's in the period	*Victim consent levels are in the performance report as one of the KPIs.* *Additional FTE data has been provided in the performance report.*	

YJS to adopt best practice template from Swindon YJS for all OOCD rationales to be written up and placed on the system-reflecting the multi-agency decision making process and child first practice	*JDMP outcomes were not clearly recorded*	Operational Manager	December 2024	• BSO minutes each meeting on standardised template including clear decision rationale and actions and these are recorded on to CV.	*Standardised template is now used to minute JDMP discussions.*	
Review capacity to deliver on these and ensure capacity aligns to need	*The lack of capacity to deliver Community Justice Panels has had a significant impact on their effectiveness*	Operational Manager	February 2025	• Review of CJPs leads to reviewed agreement on their use moving forward.	*This has not been progressed yet.*	
Ensure the needs of children in the OOCD cohort are met with the same interventions on offer in the post court cohort and ensure that services meet with the needs identified in the YJS needs analysis and performance data	*Access to support for children receiving Out of Court disposals was sometimes inconsistent*	Operational Manager	March 2025	• Training to be delivered to staff to ensure a consistent approach across court and out of court work, based on Child First principles.	*A briefing session was delivered to staff in an away day in January 25.*	
Develop a consistent multi-agency process for case formulation, assessment of risk and safety and intervention planning	*The YJS need to improve the quality of assessment and plans in relation to keeping children and others safe*	Service Manager	March 2025	• Local case management guidance to be created including: • Introduce sentence planning forum (for Court and Out of Court	*Multi-agency case formulation process is in the planning phase. Initial conversations have happened with CAMHS colleagues and there is an in principle commitment to support with delivery.*	

				cases), ensure this supports multi-agency case formulation/analysis, assessment of risk and intervention planning based on internal controls-identity development focused and external controls-presenting behaviour and risk focused • Agreed set of standard checks to be completed for all new cases	*Case management guidance will be created once this has been launched.* *A standard set of partner agency checks at the start of new interventions has been launched.*	
Ensure robust risk management arrangements are in place	*The service needs to improve the quality of risk management for children assessed as high or very high safety and well-being concerns and/or risk to others.*	Service Manager	March 2025	• Review risk management procedures and introduce Multi-agency risk management panel to replace case planning forums. Ensure this panel is multi-agency and proactively supports and shapes risk management planning and contingency planning	*This has yet to be launched.*	

Review QA arrangements for Court and out of Court to ensure they support the delivery of high quality assessments and plans	The quality of Out of Court assessments, plans and interventions was consistently of a poor standard.	Service Manager	March 2025		New QA template has been launched for AssetPlus cases
Page 220				• Develop quality assurance arrangements for new PDA tool which is consistent with that for AssetPlus • The development of the multi-agency sentence planning forum is aligned with Out of Court work. • QA documents are reviewed in line with HMIP findings and relaunched. Tools will include checks against: • Standardised process for multi-agency checks with Police and other partners. • Plans are aligned with the work of other partners • Ensuring contingency plans are robust.	Out of Court assessment template is in progress. This will follow a similar format and process. Management oversight guidance has been reviewed and relaunched.

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Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee	Reading Borough Council Working better with you

02 July 2025

Title	Response to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse in Reading
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services
Report author	Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services
Lead Councillor	Cllr Wendy Griffith, Lead Councillor for Children
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	1. To note the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection 2. To note the delivery of the single and multi-agency action plans to address the findings of the inspection (Appendices 1 & 2) 3. To note the governance arrangements (Appendices 3 & 4) 4. That Committee receives an update on progress and impact for children at the next Committee

1. Executive Summary

1.1. A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) took place in Reading from 24 February to 14 March 2025. It was an inspection of the partnership, carried out by inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP).

1.2. This JTAI focused on the multi-agency response to unborn children and children aged 0 to 7 years who are victims of domestic abuse. Inspectors' evaluation of strategic arrangements in Reading considered the multi-agency response to children of all ages.

1.3. The inspection was conducted over three weeks, the first two weeks being offsite. The third week involved fourteen inspectors, based at the Council's Civic Offices and attending other settings across the partnership in Reading.

1.4. Inspectors selected six children for in-depth single and multi-agency audits. These audits were conducted by the partnership and submitted to inspectors with accompanying child level documentation, as prescribed by inspectors.

1.5. Inspectors from all four inspectorates:

- Met with practitioners and managers across the partnership to understand our strategic and operational arrangements at the front door and how we respond to domestic abuse.

- Met with leaders across Brighter Futures for Children, the Council, health, probation, police and Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership to understand how we work together to safeguard children, including children who are victims of domestic abuse.

- Met with staff across social work teams, schools, children's centres, probation, health and police.

- Met with staff and managers delivering specialist domestic abuse services across the partnership including voluntary/community sector providers.

- Held focussed partnership discussions with staff working with the six audited children.

- Spoke to children and families.

1.6. JTAI's are ungraded partnership inspections that result in a letter identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Ofsted guidance sets out that this can include an area of priority action if inspectors '*identify a serious weakness that is placing children at risk of inadequate protection or significant harm.*'

1.7. The findings of the inspection were published on the 6 May 2025.

1.8. The final letter included the following Areas of Priority Action for the partnership:

Inconsistent information-sharing between partners resulting in delays for children, poor-quality risk assessments that fail to address the experiences and needs of children and often weak decision-making for children.

1.9. The report identifies the following strengths:

1.9.1. *Family help and children's centres provide a valued multidisciplinary response for vulnerable children and their families who are or may be victims of domestic abuse. This makes a positive difference to their lives.*

1.9.2. *The multi-agency vulnerable people pre-birth panel identifies risks for unborn children and offers early protective interventions and assessments pre-birth. Regular review of these unborn babies' circumstances allows the partnership to give early support and consider interventions to reduce risks. This includes a valued specialist midwifery team, which provides additional support to families pre- and post-birth.*

1.9.3. *Health professionals have good access to support from the specialist domestic abuse nurse, who provides advice and input to support families who are experiencing domestic abuse*

1.10. The report outlines the following areas that need to improve:

1.10.1. *How well children's voices are listened to and the experiences of individual children who have been exposed to domestic abuse are acted on by practitioners across the partnership.*

1.10.2. *How effectively professionals challenge and escalate concerns about children that are not receiving an adequate response.*

1.10.3. *The timeliness of strategy and other safeguarding meetings relating to children's well-being and the involvement of all relevant safeguarding partners when concerns arise.*

1.10.4. *The timeliness and consistency of information-sharing about risks, needs and plans for children.*

1.10.5. How well thresholds of need are understood across the partnership to meet children's needs and minimise risks.

1.10.6. Practitioners' and managers' understanding of the importance of consistent consideration of the cumulative impact on children from repeated incidents of exposure to domestic abuse.

1.10.7. How well the Safeguarding Children Partnership is informed by comprehensive detailed relevant data to sufficiently understand the experiences of children who are victims of domestic abuse and the prevalence of the issue in their area.

1.10.8. The effectiveness of commissioning of support services for children and their families based on a clear understanding of local need.

1.10.9. The oversight and effectiveness of multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC).

1.10.10. The effectiveness of strategic governance arrangements to ensure priorities are set and aligned with the other strategic partnerships, with a focus on those children subject to domestic abuse

1.11. Decisive action was taken by the partnership during the JTAI, whereby both multi and single agency action plans were implemented at pace to address child level, operational and strategic areas of weakness.

1.12. Comprehensive and robust single and multi-agency action plans, governance and scrutiny are being implemented. Escalation processes are well understood and there is clear evidence of escalations taking place and having a positive impact on practice across the partnership.

1.13. A Partnership Action Plan in response to the findings is required to be submitted to Ofsted by 13th August 2025. This will be signed off by the Strategic Partnership Group prior to submission, in consultation with the Chair of the Berkshire West Children's Safeguarding Committee and the Independent Scrutineer.

2. Policy Context

2.1. Incorporated on 5 April 2018 and operational since 3 December 2018, Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), a company limited by guarantee, delivers children's services on behalf of Reading Borough Council (RBC). The company is wholly owned by but independent of the Council and is governed by an independent Board to ensure operational autonomy.

2.2. On the 28 January 2025 Council agreed not to extend its contract with Brighter Futures for Children Ltd and to bring its Children's Services back in-house. The transition back into the Council will take place in the Autumn.

2.3. Following the JTAI of the multi-agency response to children in Reading who are victims of domestic abuse, the Department for Education (DfE) has indicated that it will issue a non-statutory Improvement Notice to the Council, followed by the appointment of a DFE Improvement Advisor. Consequently, monitoring visits by Ofsted are expected to commence in the Autumn - the dates and the frequency of these visits is not yet known.

2.4. The DfE Improvement Advisor will sit on the Brighter Futures for Children's Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee and then the RBC Children's Services Improvement Board (see 3.5.1).

3. The Proposal

3.1. Following the JTAI both single and multi-agency action plans have been implemented across the partnership.

3.2. Children's Services' Single Agency Action Plan (Appendix 1):

3.2.1.   The Children's Services Rapid Improvement Plan details the actions needed to improve performance indicators and outcomes for children across eight priority areas:

- Timeliness of strategy meetings

- Children being seen regularly

- Safety plans

- Timeliness of s47 child protection investigations and single assessments

- Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences

- Timeliness of Core Groups

- Regular high-quality supervision and management oversight

- Timeliness of Care Proceedings

3.2.2.   By taking an approach that covers all children open to Children's Social Care the impact will, by necessity, be wider than on children who are victims of domestic abuse. In taking this approach, the Plan will also address areas of improvement identified in the 2024 Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) where insufficient progress has been made.

3.2.3.   The Rapid Improvement Plan outlines detailed actions under each area, key performance indicators, milestones and how our quality assurance framework will work to triangulate impact and outcomes for children based on actions taken to improve compliance and performance.

3.2.4.   The success of the Rapid Improvement Plan will be supported by a functional change in practice. Currently children move from the Children's Single Point of Access (front door) to the Together for Families Service. Together for Families undertake an initial assessment and a wide range of short to long-term work with children, including those on a child in need plan, child protection plan, going through court proceedings or becoming cared for.

3.2.5.   We know from our data that our Together for Families' social workers' caseloads are too high. This is attributed to a high number of assessments impacting on social workers' ability to develop relational practice with children and on their ability to conclude their work with families in a timely way. We also know that the demands and complexity of court work impacts on social workers' ability to progress new assessments in a timely way.

3.2.6.   It is therefore our intention to establish a separate assessment team, removing this element from Together for Families. This shift is in line with practice in other local authorities and staff have told us that this is what will make a real difference to their ability to deliver timely and high-quality services to children and families.

3.2.7.   Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, support and protect children) removed the requirement for the lead practitioner for Children In Need to be a social worker. It introduced the option for alternatively qualified practitioners to undertake this role, with the oversight of a social work qualified manager. This is also in line with changes in practice under the government's Families First programme. We are therefore also progressing our plans to adopt this practice, plans that predated the JTAI. Following consultation with a cohort of Family Support Workers, these skilled staff will become lead practitioners for Children In Need. This shift will also contribute to the required reduction in social workers' caseloads.

3.2.8.   Reporting and governance of the Plan is outlined in section 3.5.1.

3.3.   Multi-agency Action Plan (Appendix 2):

3.3.1. The partnership has implemented a Priority Action Improvement Plan that details the multi-agency actions required across the partnership broken down by the ten areas of improvement identified in the JTAI:

- Voice and experience of individual children

- Strategy meetings

- Information sharing

- Threshold of need

- Cumulative impact of domestic abuse

- Use of data

- Commissioned services

- MARAC arrangements (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences)

- Challenge and escalation

- Strategic governance arrangements

3.3.2. Each of the ten areas has an accountable lead from across the partnership. Key performance indicators measure progress and impact and a multi-agency audit on children who are victims of domestic abuse will be undertaken in September 2025 to assess impact.

3.4. Progress to date:

3.4.1. As outlined above plans are being implemented across the partnership as is governance of the improvement work (see 3.5.2).

3.4.2. Requirements regarding timeframes for safeguarding processes have been reinforced both within Brighter Futures for Children and across the partnership, enabling professionals to hold each other to account.

3.4.3. Escalation processes and procedures have been reviewed and reinforced across the partnership. There is now evidence of an increase in the use of challenge and escalation across the partnership. This includes escalation when partner agencies are unable to attend strategy meetings, with evidence of these escalation procedures preventing or reducing the length of delays.

3.4.4. Streamlined processes have been introduced in setting up strategy meetings, facilitating both an improvement in timeliness and the ability to report on timeliness. Further work on Mosaic reporting capabilities is underway to reduce the reliance on manual reporting.

3.4.5. There is evidence of increased use of safety plans in work with children and families, including those who are victims of domestic abuse. Where new children referred to the service require an initial safety plan this is now completed at the front door. For children open to the service a new safety plan template has been completed, and workshops are being run throughout June to strengthen understanding and practice in this area. Audits of safety plans will happen over the summer to assess the impact of this work on outcomes for children.

3.4.6. Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership has approved its priorities for 2025-28. This includes Priority 3: Safeguarding Children from Domestic Abuse. The Executive Director for Children's Services is the accountable lead for the delivery of this priority across the next three years.

3.5. Governance of the single and multi-agency improvement work is outlined in Appendix 3:

3.5.1. Progress against the Children's Services Rapid Improvement Plan is scrutinised weekly by the Children's Services Senior Leadership Team, chaired by the

Executive Director for Children's Services and monthly by the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee, chaired by the Chair of the Brighter Futures for Children's Board. The RBC Chief Executive is now a member of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee and, once appointed, the DfE Improvement Advisor will join the Committee. Following transition into the Council the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee will transition into the independently chaired Children's Services Practice Improvement Board.

3.5.2.   Progress against the Multi-Agency Priority Action Improvement Plan is overseen by the weekly multi-agency Operational Group, currently chaired by the Director of Family Help and Safeguarding and scrutinised fortnightly by the multi-agency Strategic Group, chaired by the Executive Director for Children's Services.

3.6.   Domestic Abuse Strategic Governance is outlined in Appendix 4.

3.6.1.   The Community Safety Partnership has sub-groups that report into it, this includes the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, which has a Children's Working Group. This Working Group, reporting to the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will formally link with Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership to ensure that the work of both groups is aligned. This will be facilitated through joint membership of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board Children's Working Group and the BWSCP Priority 3: Safeguarding Children from Domestic Abuse workstream group.

3.6.2.   An external review of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board is in the process of being commissioned by the Director of Communities and Adults' Social Care. This will include a Strategic Needs Assessment that will be used to identify needs, set priorities and drive delivery and commissioning of specialist domestic abuse services. The review will also identify best practice for a partnership dataset moving forward. The review will take three months, concluding by the end of August and reporting into the Community Safety Partnership.

3.7.   The findings of the JTAI evidenced that we need to be doing more and doing things differently, as a partnership, to recognise and respond to children who are victims of domestic abuse in Reading. This is not good enough. We have responded at pace and taken swift action to improve safeguarding practice across the partnership.

3.8.   We have an agreed plan with partners and a rapid improvement plan that have reset our focus on getting the basics right. We can see green shoots of these plans working, including escalations to police regarding strategy discussions and these now being resolved the same day for children; improved attendance by health partners; changes to the recording system which mean it is easier for social workers to book and record strategy discussions, which are now also reportable for leaders to maintain a clear line of sight. Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences is improving, and all plans are now reviewed and signed off by the Service Manager as an additional quality assurance measure. There has been an increase in the use of safety plans and workshops to improve practice in this area are underway.

3.9.   It is critical that all the activity outlined above continues to be delivered at pace to ensure improvement in the delivery of children's safeguarding services to Reading's children.

4.   Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1.   The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. The priorities that response to the inspection findings contribute to are:

• Promote more equal communities in Reading
• Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
• Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

4.2.   In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

5.   Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1.   None.

6.   Community Engagement

6.1.   Ofsted spoke to children and families impacted by domestic abuse and other agencies providing services to Reading's children and families as part of the inspection process. This included providers of specialist domestic abuse services across Reading.

6.2.   To fully assess the impact of the improvement work underway, children and their families will be engaged both to understand their views on the work we are undertaking to improve services and to hear from them on their experience of receiving our services.

7.   Equality Implications

7.1.   Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2.   An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not required as the report itself does not have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics these are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation. However, it is important to recognise the intersectionality between protected characteristics and domestic abuse and the impact on children. This includes care experienced young people, a protected characteristic in Reading.

8.   Other Relevant Considerations

8.1.   None noted

9.   Legal Implications

9.1.   If an area for priority action is relevant to the local authority, the inspection framework requires Ofsted to inform the Department for Education (DfE). Following Ofsted informing the DfE, it has indicated that it will issue a non-statutory Improvement Notice to the Council, followed by the appointment of a DfE Improvement Advisor.

9.2.   Non-statutory intervention includes: the provision of external consultancy, advisory or peer support, often from another council; the establishment of improvement boards (with or without an independent chair); enhanced monitoring and challenge; and the issuing of non-statutory Improvement Notices which have often been used to underpin a package of intervention (made up of some or all of the above). The Council has powers to establish an Improvement Board and appoint an Independent Chair under the General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011). As the Improvement Board will be comprised of officers, councillors, and independent persons, it cannot be a formal Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council (section 101 Local Government Act 1972). This means that the Improvement Board is advisory and assists the executive powers of the Council, through the powers delegated to the Executive Director, and the political

and scrutiny powers of the Council, through the powers delegated to Policy Committee and the ACE Committee (Adults, Social Care and Education Committee).

9.3.   The Council is in the process of setting up an Improvement Board, a Council requirement of the decision to transition Children's Services back into the Council. A report recommending the Terms of Reference and appointment process for an Independent Chair was presented to Council in June. The DfE Improvement Advisor will be a member of the Improvement Board.

10.   Financial Implications

10.1.   To deliver improvement work at pace additional short-term capacity is required to ensure children in Reading are safe and that practitioners have manageable workloads. A business case has been developed to authorise short term funding through a combination of new grant funding, use of Brighter Futures for Children's reserves and the Council's Delivery Fund.

11.   Timetable for Implementation

11.1.   Both the Single Agency and Partnership Action Plans have been implemented and will continue to be reported on and scrutinised as outlined in the governance arrangements in section 3.5.

11.2.   A Partnership Action Plan will be submitted to Ofsted by 13th August 2025.

12.   Background Papers

12.1.   There are none.

Appendices

1.   Single Agency Action Plan

2.   Multi-Agency Action Plan

3.   JTAI Improvement Plan Governance Structure

4.   Domestic Abuse Strategic Governance Structure

Appendix 1 Single Agency Action Plan

Priority Area	Impact for Children	KPI *target for Sept 2025	QA Measure
Timeliness of strategy meetings	All children where there is a concern about significant harm have a multi-agency Strategy meeting convened to ensure their safety and protection	100%	Quality assurance and dip sampling of strategy discussions, including checks that all partners are present. Check actions are undertaken, and safety plans are in place. Check SEND needs are recognised and SEND team involved.
Children being seen regularly	That children are seen alone regularly, in response to their needs and that those visits are purposeful and lead to clear planning and improved outcomes That children can build trusted relationships with the workers that visit them - children feel seen and heard	75%	Quality assurance review & audits of visits to ensure they are written to the child, and that the child's voice is clearly recorded. Visits are linked to an action on the child's plan to ensure the visit is purposeful.
Safety plans	That Risk Assessments are child focussed, timely, effective and dynamic responding to changing needs and circumstances. That Risk Assessments keep children safe	N/A	Quality assurance, dip sampling and audits of the quality, effectiveness and child focus of Safety Plans and not placing a burden on survivors
Timeliness of s47 child protection investigations and single assessments	To ensure that we understand the needs of our children, the risks and strengths in their family network, and provide timely and purposeful help/support to ensure the child is safe and improve outcomes for the child To ensure children who need our protection are protected without delay	S47's 75% Single Assessment 72%	Quality assurance, dip sampling and audits of Single Assessments/S47 (are they holistic, are the focussed, are they child focussed and evidencing child voice, pathways to support, etc). Specific monitoring of contacts coming back in within 3 months of closure, and re-referrals
Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences	Children have clear, specific, measurable multi-agency plans that are focussed on impact on outcomes within 15 days of their assessment completing	80%	Quality of every child protection plan is reviewed by the Service Manager; with Head of Transformation & QA oversight
Timeliness of Core Groups	That children are well supported to have effective, timely, driven plans to ensure that managers have a clear line of sight of children's needs, strengths and	85%	Minutes signed off by managers with a view as to how these meetings are improving outcomes for children and driving forward the child protection plan

	plans, avoiding drift and delay. That together we are ambitious for improved outcomes for children		
Regular high-quality case supervision and management oversight	Work with children and families is purposeful and outcome focused, driven through regular, consistent, reflective and high-quality supervision of staff	85%	Quality of supervision in addition to regularity and quality of management oversight is scrutinised through performance reporting, audits of children's files and supervision audits and observations.
Timeliness of Care Proceedings	Giving families and their wider significant other networks the best opportunity to care effectively for their child/children. Good quality and timely decision making for children who need to be protected from harm	85%	Quality and sufficiency of child-centred care planning monitored and audited through weekly pre-proceedings and legal gateway meetings.

Appendix 2 Multi-Agency Action Plan

Joint Targeted Area Inspection: Reading
24th February - 10th March 2025

Multi-Agency Improvement Plan

Area for priority action:
Shortfalls in the multi-agency strategic safeguarding partnership leading to systemic weaknesses in multi-agency safeguarding practice. This includes inconsistent information-sharing between partners resulting in delays for children, poor-quality risk assessments that fail to address the experiences and needs of children and often weak decision-making for children.

KEY

Blue	Completed
Green	On track
Amber	Emerging possibility that action will not be completed on time, attention needed
Red	Highly likely action will not be completed on time, urgent action needed

Improvement Objectives - SUMMARY	Characteristics of good:
SUMMARY OF CHANGE REQUIRED The JTAI identified the following areas of improvement, this plans list the actions that will contribute to one of more of these areas under each theme: 1. The voice and experience of individual children exposed to domestic abuse, so they are listened to and acted on by practitioners across the partnership. 2. Strategy meetings and other safeguarding meetings involving children should involve all relevant partners and happen in a timely manner. 3. Issues with timely and consistent information sharing relating to risk, needs and plans for children. 4. Understanding of threshold of need across the partnership to meet the children's needs. 5. Consideration of the cumulative impact of repeated experience of domestic abuse and cumulative impact on the child. 6. Children's safeguarding partnership use and insight of detailed and relevant data to help understand the impact on children who are victims of domestic abuse. 7. Commissioning of support services for children and families. 8. Oversight and effectiveness of MARAC arrangements. 9. Ensuring effective challenge and escalation when an appropriate response is not received. 10. Strategic governance arrangements to ensure they are aligned with other partnerships for children who are victims of domestic abuse.	Children's voices are clearly articulated and their lived experience of domestic abuse and its impact is well understood. This understanding, informed by a comprehensive local probem profile, informs operational and strategic responses to domestic abuse that are delivered to a high standard across the local partnership in a coordinated way. Risk management, safeguarding thresholds and responses are well understood by all agencies and where issues arise/standards are not met, partners adopt a soultion focused, collaborative approach to problem-solving which includes the appropriate & timely use of formal escalation processes. MASA priorities are child focused and progress against outcomes is informed by a partnership data set. MASA governance is aligned across other partnerships, including those where children are not the sole focus.

Improvement Objective 1: *VOICE AND EXPERIENCE OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN*	Moderate risk: Activity is necessary	Characteristics of good:
Accountable lead: TVP		Children's voices are listened to and the experiences of individual children who have been exposed to domestic abuse are acted on by practitioners across the partnership.

REF	Action	Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
1.1	MULTI-AGENCY: ABE interviewing with police is in place – to upskill social workers and police officers when undertaking Sect 47 enquiries.	In place	Police and CSC	Service Delivery and Design	Operational	Blue	
1.2	MULTI-AGENCY: All partners across the Reading partnership can evidence that they collectively listen to the voices of children who have been exposed to domestic abuse, and understand their lived experiences, and then act on that evidence.	30.06.2025	BWSCP	Service Delivery and Design	Operational	Amber	
1.3	MULTI-AGENCY: Undertake a multi-agency audit of domestic abuse that includes hearing the voice and understanding the experience of children	30.09.2025	BWSCP	Service Delivery and Design	Operational	Amber	

Improvement Objective 2: *STRATEGY MEETINGS*	High risk: Urgent activity required	Characteristics of good:
Accountable lead: BFfC		Strategy and other safeguarding meetings relating to children's well-being are timely and includes the involvement of all relevant safeguarding partners when concerns arise.

REF	Action	Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
2.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Multi-agency safety planning as practice standard: Clear expectations to be set in respect to child-centred and individual safety plans as an outcome of strategy meetings; when a strategy meeting is not in place within 1 working day and before an ICPC.	30.05.25	BFfC with partners	Learning and Training	Strategic	Blue	Amber
2.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Multi-agency workshop to socialise and embed practice expectations. Any delay to be escalated in line with the BWSCP procedure and a log to be kept that is reported on at the MASH Operational Group and escalated to the Berkshire West MASH Strategic Oversight Group.	30.06.25	BFfC with partners	Learning and Training	Strategic	Green	Amber
2.3	MULTI-AGENCY: Peer Review in BFfC CSPoA being undertaken by Kent to assess effectiveness of CSPoA – this will be informed by all JTAI findings, including a focus on strategy meetings.	underway	Partnership and Kent CC	Service Delivery and Design	Strategic	Green	
2.4	MULTI-AGENCY: Checklists to be in place to ensure all professionals involved with a child, or significant adults involved with the child, are considered at strategy meetings. In CSPoA, to provide reassurance that Probation is contacted to check their involvement with an adult, as routine practice. This to be confirmed through a dip sample of cases that came in over the next 2 months and to feedback to the monitoring group mid May 2025.	15.05.25	BFfC	Service Delivery and Design	Operational	Green	Amber
2.5	MULTI-AGENCY: MASH practitioners to ensure that the recommendation for a strategy meeting made to the Assessment Team is more robust with clear timescales to minimise drift and the impactof cumulative delays upon a child and family.	30.05.25	BFfC	Service Delivery and Design	Operational	Green	Amber

Improvement Objective 3: *INFORMATION SHARING*	Moderate risk: Activity is necessary	Characteristics of good:
Accountable lead: BFfC		There is timely and consistent information-sharing about risks, needs and plans for children.

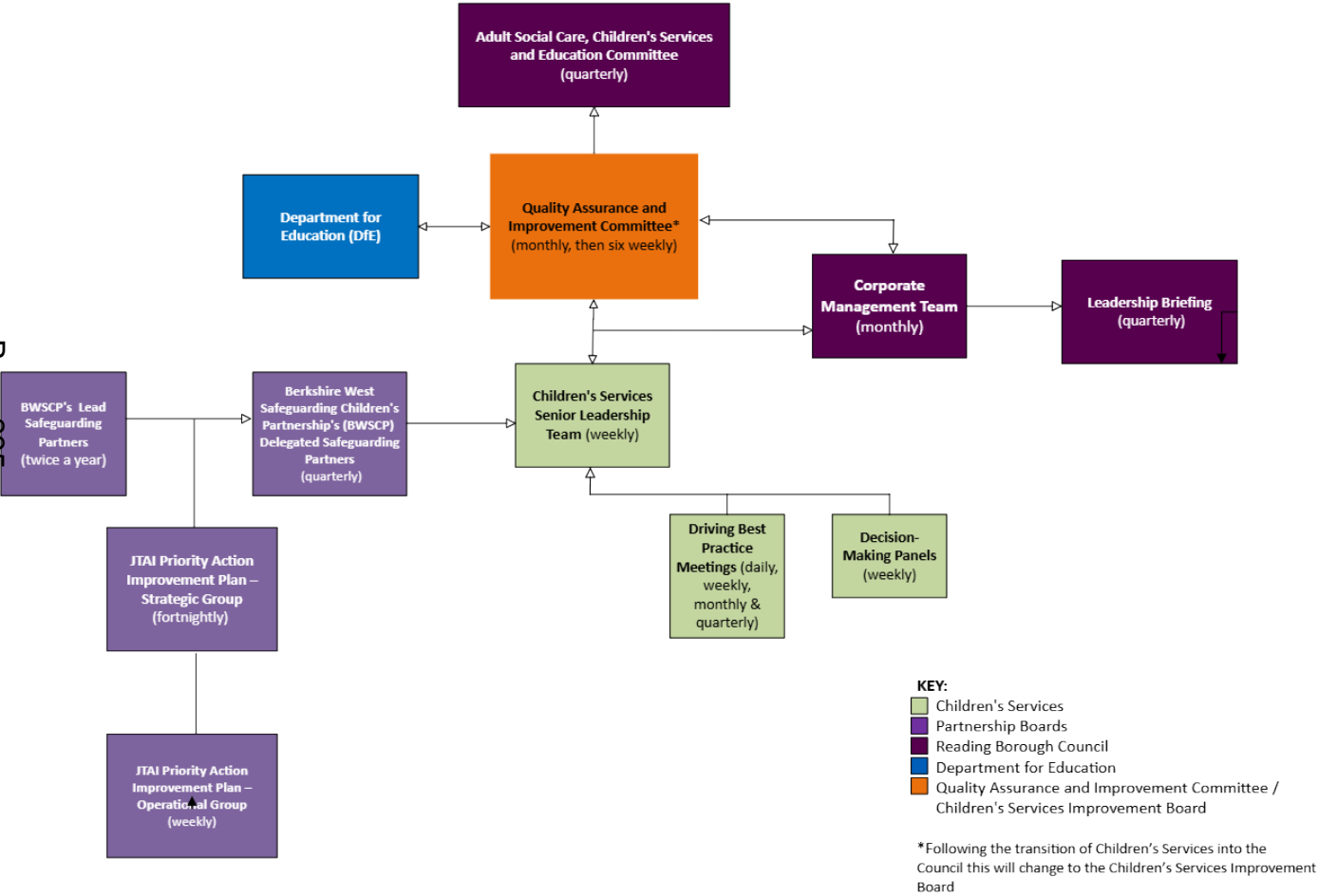| REF	Action	Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
3.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Multi-agency practice expectations to be discussed, socialised and embedded through a workshop to address practice relating to: - Improving the safeguarding notification processes and develop effective and timely information sharing with all partners, especially GPs. - Ensure communication and co-ordination at the earliest opportunity when information becomes known about children in different households linked to the same adults and associated risks. - Capture the voice of the child, wishes, feelings and lived experiences as standard by all agencies - Distribute and socialise the consistent and informed use of DASH forms in all agencies to provide consistent benchmarking of risk. Health to ensure DASH form is completed, and risks known by HV and GP around DA to be shared with their service even if the pregnant mother does not disclose this.	30.06.25	BFfC	Learning and Training	Operational	Green	Amber
3.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Audit the quality, consistency and timeliness of information-sharing between the partner agencies involved in safeguarding children and domestic abuse.	30.07.25	BWSCP	Information Sharing	Operational	Green	

Improvement Objective 4: *THRESHOLD OF NEED*		High risk: Urgent activity required		Characteristics of good:				
Accountable lead: BFfC				Thresholds of need are well understood across the partnership to meet children's needs and minimise risks.				
REF	Action		Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
4.1	Multi-agency: Action is taken to consider how well thresholds of need are understood across the partnership to meet children's needs and minimise risks.		30.05.2025	BFfC	Service Delivery and Design	Operational	Green	

Improvement Objective 5: *CUMULATIVE IMPACT*		Moderate risk: Activity is necessary		Characteristics of good:				
Accountable lead: TVP				Practitioners and managers understand of the importance of consistent consideration of the cumulative impact on children from repeated incidents of exposure to domestic abuse.				
REF	Action		Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
5.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Males identified as potential perpertrators of Domestic Abuse must be considered by front line practitioners as to what involvment and understanding they have regarding the impact of their behaviour		30.06.2025	TVP with support from BFfC	Service Delivery and Design	Operational	Green	

Improvement Objective 6: *USE OF DATA*		High risk: Urgent activity required		Characteristics of good:				
Accountable lead: BFfC				The Safeguarding Children Partnership is well informed by comprehensive detailed relevant data to sufficiently understand the experience of children who are victims of domestic abuse and the prevalence of the issue in their area.				
REF	Action		Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
6.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Domestic Abuse needs assessment of the safeguarding partnership to be informed by relevant data from health, police and Local Authority in order to plan for the needs of the local population.		30.06.2025	BFfC	Information Sharing	Operational	Amber	
6.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Consolidation of performance information and data related to Domestic Abuse to fully understand the needs of the local population and impact upon safeguarding children.		30.06.2025	BWSCP	Information Sharing	Strategic	Amber	
6.3	MULTI-AGENCY: Review information sharing protocols and information sharing templates to ensure all agencies disclose relevent and appropriate information ar the right time to enable effective safeguarding of children and young people whilst maintaining compliance with data protection requirements		30.05.2025	BWSCP	Information Sharing	Operational	Amber	

Improvement Objective 7: *COMMISSIONED SERVICES*		High risk: Urgent activity required		Characteristics of good:				
Accountable lead: TVP				There is effective commisioning of support services for children and their families based on a clear understanding of local need.				
REF	Action		Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
7.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Overcome criteria and barriers to accessing specialist services such as Freedom programme and DA work with both parents		30.06.2025	BWSCP	Service Delivery and Design	Operational	Amber	

Improvement Objective 8: *MARAC ARRANGEMENTS*		Moderate risk: Activity is necessary		Characteristics of good:				
Accountable lead: TVP				There is good oversight and effectiveness of multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC).				
REF	Action		Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
8.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Refresh and update partnership knowledge of MARAC function and role and their potential impact for practitioners across different agencies.		30.06.25	TVP	Learning and Training	Operational	Green	

Improvement Objective 9: *CHALLENGE AND ESCALATION*		Moderate risk: Activity is necessary		Characteristics of good:				
Accountable lead: BFfC				Professionals challenge and escalate concerns about children that are not receiving an adequate response.				
REF	Action		Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
9.1	MULTI-AGENCY: The partnership takes action to evidence how professionals effectively challenge and escalate concerns about children that are not receiving an adequate response, and how this impacts on the lives of children.		30.06.25	BWSCP	Service Delivery and Design	Strategic	Amber	

Improvement Objective 10: *STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS*		High risk: Urgent activity required		Characteristics of good:				
Accountable lead: BFfC				There is effective strategic governance arrangements to ensure priorities are set and aligned with the other strategic partnerships, with a focus on those children subject to domestic abuse				
REF	Action		Complete by	Owners	Theme	Plan	Progress RAG	Impact RAG
10.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Strengthen the role and oversight that the performance and Quality Improvement Sub Group and the BW Executive have to ensure both forums hold all parterns to account and provide appropriate scrutiny and direction in order to secure the improvement required.		30.06.25	BWSCP	Strategic Partnership (MASA)	Strategic	Green	
10.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Strengthen formal communciation and reporting arrangment across the strategic partnership - Domestic Abuse Board, Safeguarding Children Partnership, Community Safety Partnership etc		30.06.25	BWSCP	Strategic Partnership (MASA)	Strategic	Green	

Appendix 3 JTAI Improvement Plan Governance Structure

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee (quarterly)

Department for Education (DfE)

Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee* (monthly, then six weekly)

Corporate Management Team (monthly)

Leadership Briefing (quarterly)

BWSCP's Lead Safeguarding Partners (twice a year)

Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership's (BWSCP) Delegated Safeguarding Partners (quarterly)

Children's Services Senior Leadership Team (weekly)

JTAI Priority Action Improvement Plan – Strategic Group (fortnightly)

Driving Best Practice Meetings (daily, weekly, monthly & quarterly)

Decision-Making Panels (weekly)

JTAI Priority Action Improvement Plan – Operational Group (weekly)

KEY:
- Children's Services
- Partnership Boards
- Reading Borough Council
- Department for Education
- Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee / Children's Services Improvement Board

*Following the transition of Children's Services into the Council this will change to the Children's Services Improvement Board

Appendix 4 Domestic Abuse Strategic Governance Structure

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Community Safety      │
│     Partnership         │
└───────────┬─────────────┘
            │
┌───────────┴─────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Reading Domestic      │         │   Berkshire West        │
│   Abuse Partnership     │ ─ ─ ─ ─▶│   Safeguarding          │
│        Board            │         │   Children's            │
└───────────┬─────────────┘         │   Partnership           │
            │                       │   (BWSCP)               │
┌───────────┴─────────────┐         │                         │
│     Children's          │         │                         │
│   Domestic Abuse        │ ─ ─ ─ ─▶│                         │
│   Working Group         │         │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────────┘
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