

Bury – DfE Project Safety Valve Agreement / SEND Transformation

Update: October 2021

Link to SEND Transformation

SEND Transformation

As communicated in the recent [letter to schools](#), the Department of Children and Young People is committed to transforming Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision in Bury, as part of its improvement journey in all areas of delivery to the Borough's children, young people, and families. As a Local Area for SEND we are currently revising our Local Area Strategic Action Plan.

We recognise our schools as key partners and the commitment and passion schools have for children and young people with SEND in Bury.

Within the letter we shared, we provided an overview of the action plan and we'd like to share an update of progress here:

Strengthen and improve the Special Educational Needs assessment and placements process, working with schools and their SENCOs to improve the experience for children, young people and their families and to achieve a consistency of approach across the Borough.

- We have established a Practice & Process workstream to ensure that the SEND assessment EHCP and annual review processes are consistently of the highest quality. Work underway in this includes:
 - Developing a training programme for the SEN team and wider
 - Improving documentation which will underpin EHCP improvements
 - Working together with parents and carers to improve process and practice in EHCP assessments
- Vision House SEMH RP opened. The formal opening of Vision House RP, Bury's first primary SEMH provision, took place on Friday 24 September, marking the first significant event in the expansion of Bury's range of specialist provision
- Sencos have received information about Project Safety Valve which has been linked to the work completed through the networks in the previous academic year as well as to the revision of Bury's Graduated Approach – a thorough launch
- Discussion activities have taken place with the Sencos to share the intent and possibilities of the document and to take views to set the co-production ball rolling with schools
- Feedback about the process, the value of the work itself and the opportunity presented for real SEND Transformation has been really positive and a great deal of enthusiasm has been generated.

Ensure robust planning for future provision, including reducing the use of independent school placements by increasing the availability and suitability of local provision within Bury. This will include developing a model for forecasting future needs.

- The sections on Capital and the Special Free School in this report below set out the current position regarding place planning and developing specialist provision within Bury. This work is underway and developments will be reported to future meetings of the Schools Forum.

Improve quality and timeliness of management information to enable the evaluation of the impact of the council's SEND support services and agree with schools what they require to assist them in meeting demands.

- We have established a technology workstream which will enhance the use of technology (systems and data) to drive, reflect, and sustain best practice.
- We will be establishing, and working with, a sub-group of the schools forum to review the effectiveness of the council's SEND support services as part of the High Needs Funding review.

Review the way we use the finances available for supporting children and young people with SEND in as effective and efficient ways as possible.

- There is a separate report on this agenda setting out proposals for top-ups in Mainstream schools. All other aspects of the High Needs Funding block will be considered by the sub-group of the Schools Forum we are intending to establish.

Develop a culture in which demand is more effectively managed throughout the authority, resulting in a more equitable allocation of resources and services.

- We have established a workforce workstream that focuses on improving the way we recruit, retain and develop talent and build capability across our workforce. We have recently appointed:
 - 4 new SEN caseworkers starting throughout October
 - Our new SEN Team Manager will be starting with us on 8 November

Workstreams

The project management development behind delivering all the Safety Valve priorities is now well established and continues to be enhanced on a weekly basis between Local Authority, strategic partner (Ameo FutureGov), and all stakeholders, specifically Health, Care, Schools, and Parent/Carer groups.

Bury has developed its workstreams as follows:

- Programme coordination
- Practice and Process
- Technology
- Graduated Approach
- Workforce

- Finance
- Strategy and Policy
- Communications, Engagement and Coproduction

Each workstream is subject to ongoing review to ensure full delivery of all SEND Transformation priorities within the Safety Valve agreed timeframe. Weekly meetings record the progress as can be seen at the attached document:



Additional documents and updates in respect to each workstream are provided as embedded links in the above document. These can be provided separately upon request if for any reason the links do not open.

DSG Deficit Recovery

Further to the update provided for June 2021, the financial plan continues to be updated and remains subject to variation. The current outline financial plan includes progress being made in respect to key aspects of the SEND funding transformation which will require consultation with stakeholders prior to implementation of change, currently proposed to take place at the start of the next new financial year (April 2022).

The attached document provides a detailed summary of the current considerations to funding and deficit recovery developments:



Within the attached is the current DSG recovery profile as follows:

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Pre PSV	20.067	27.407	28.639	28.541	25.605	19.038
Post PSV	20.067	27.407	22.639	18.541	11.605	2.038
DfE Safety Valve contribution to DSG		6.000	4.000	4.000	3.000	3.000
PSV Programme Capacity		0.000	1.125	1.125	0.902	0.902
Cumulative	20.067	21.407	19.764	15.666	9.507	-0.060

Capital

The Local Authority welcomed the opportunity to apply for additional High Needs Capital funding and has submitted a request for £6.275million to support the developments required to increase capacity and sufficiency of SEND provision within Bury.

The submission outlined 18 separate developments within Bury's Mainstream and Special provisions, with 6 of these being funded from Bury's existing Capital funding – therefore not subject to the £6.275 additional capital funding application.

Bury is pleased to have received the response from the DfE, provided on 30 June 2021, and confirmation of additional High Needs Capital of £3.781m. The DfE response identified 'strong support' for 7 of Bury's outlined Capital proposals totalling £1.700m. These schemes are generally of a smaller nature, covering Nurture and other designated SEND initiatives/spaces within Mainstream provision, and will all greatly contribute to supporting Bury's inclusion priority.

The balance of £2.081m is subject to further strategic consideration as to which of the 5 other schemes outlined on Bury's additional Capital submission are the priorities to support. These schemes include expansion and re-development of Special and Mainstream provision, including Resourced Provision bases.

The future of Bury's SEND pupil place planning is key to determining the priorities for agreeing the capacity and sufficiency of SEND places across the region and to exactly which capital schemes will be progressed. Bury's School Organisation and SEND teams are working with the commissioned strategic partner (Ameo FutureGov) colleagues to deliver the place planning strategy that will confirm future provision and link directly with contributing to the DSG deficit recovery as part of the mitigation to prevent high-cost out-of-borough placements where possible.

Special Free School

Bury also submitted a pre-approval application for a Special Free School to provide additional capacity for Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

The DfE also confirmed in their letter of 30 June 2021 that this application has been approved and included the following constructive recommendations;

- The school is a special school and does not cater for pupils without EHCPs (unless the pupil has been referred for a statutory assessment, which the LA has agreed to).
- The LA increases the size of the school, altering the pupil build-up to reach a viable number of over 60 places once full. This could include places commissioned from neighbouring LAs.
- The LA provides further detail about any positive financial impact the free school would have, particularly on the LA's current transport and out of borough/independent school costs.

A meeting has been arranged with DfE Special Free School policy colleagues to discuss this proposal further, the agenda will agree the next steps and covers the following;

- The address of the proposed site and current planning designation.
- Confirmation of the ownership of the site.
- Any known abnormalities on the site.
- Details of the school (e.g. type of need and age range).
- The size of the school and commissioning arrangements.
- How the Free School fits with the strategic plan for special needs provision in Bury.

Next Steps

As part of the Finance workstream, we intend to review all areas of the High Needs Funding block to consider whether our current patterns of spending are appropriate and to maximise the impact on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This will include the advisory teams currently supported by the HNF block.

In order to do so, we want to establish a sub-group of the Schools Forum, with representatives from all types of schools, to work with us on the detail of this review.

Conclusion

A significant amount of development has been made into each of the priority transformation areas including engagement throughout with all stakeholders. Bury is reaching a pivotal stage in the financial recovery through consultation during the Autumn 2021 term with key funding remodelling being implemented with effect from 1 April 2022.

Support from the DfE may be requested in respect to positively backing any submissions made as part of the school funding mechanism to disapply any funding protections that may hinder the proposed funding changes and DSG deficit recovery, including disapplications for Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) and Special School Minimum Funding Guarantee where required.

Further details in respect to the above summary update are available via Steven Goodwin, Head of Strategic Business and Finance, s.goodwin@bury.gov.uk