

Safety Valve Monitoring template: Kent County Council

Date Submitted	14/09/2023	
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Safety Valve: Summary of Kent's progress as at Quarter 2 2023/24

Kent County Council is committed to reducing its High Needs DSG deficit to the levels set out in the table below. Kent plans to achieve this by taking service measures which will deliver better value from the available resources. These measures and current progress with their implementation, are described below.

Year	Forecast accumulated DSG Deficit Profile at year end £m (Per SV Agreement Letter October 22)	Forecast accumulated DSG Deficit Profile at year end £M (Per Q2 31 August 2023)	Variance	RAG
22-23	129.7	117.7	-12.0	GREEN
23-24	156.1	142.8	-13.4	GREEN
24-25	170.5	161.1	-9.4	GREEN
25-26	174.2	168.7	-5.5	GREEN
26-27	163.1	161.1	-2.0	GREEN
27-28	140.0	140.0	0.0	GREEN

The overall accumulated forecast DSG deficit position for 2023-24 suggests a £13.4m total improved position compared to the forecast position in the Safety Valve agreement. This includes the improved position of the 2022-23 carry forward of £12m detailed in the quarter 1 report with a further £1.4m anticipated improvement from the 2023-24 in-year DSG position forecast in the Safety Valve profile.

The Safety Valve profile estimated the in-year High Needs deficit to be around +£40.9m (before additional contributions from both the DFE and KCC) and current estimates indicate the Council is currently on target with a small variance of +£0.1m compared to the original profile.

The position on both the Early Years (EYB) and Schools Blocks (SB) are better than included in the original profile with estimated in-year underspends of £0.6m and £0.9m respectively, resulting in a forecast accumulated deficit on the DSG as at 31st March 2024 of £143m (compared to an initial estimate

in the Safety Valve of £156.1m).

Whilst the overall forecast in-year High Needs deficit is on target, the financial contingency we had built in for 2023-24 is expected to be fully utilised to fund higher average costs of mainstream in top-up, specialist resource provisions and independent sector placements, along with higher numbers of mainstream top-up applications. It is recognised these are early forecasts and that placement activity during September and October, when students return to school, will be crucial in refining these forecasts and a fuller update will be provided in the Q3 report due in December.

With possible early indicators of financial risks resulting predominantly from higher average costs of placements and support, all surpluses reported in 22-23 and 2023-24 care assumed to be fully required in future years and will not be used to reduce the deficit over the longer term. Therefore, the accumulated DSG deficit as at March 2028 remains unchanged at £140m. We continue to keep this under review and are considering what further actions should be taken.

Since the Q1 report, two finance/business analysts have been recruited in August 2023 to support the monitoring of benefit realisation across both the Safety Valve and Accelerated Progress Plan projects. The analysts are currently completing a scoping exercise to determine which projects can be monitored separately and which are enablers of wider strategic goals whose impact (including financial) cannot be monitored separately. An update on this approach will be given in the next monitoring report. In the meantime, financial estimates of impact have been made as part of the updates below, where projects have progressed sufficiently, and savings can be reasonably evidenced.

Our latest EHCP data is included below including comparators to the Safety Valve initial estimates. This indicates we are comparable to the Safety Valve estimate for 2024. However, in recent months our performance for completing EHCP needs assessments has reduced whilst the new SEN staffing structure and processes have been embedded. This is likely to have impacted the current number of EHCPs. Further information is given within the progress update below (under Agreement 3).

Age of Child with EHCP	<i>Safety Valve Jan 23 Estimated No of EHCPs</i>	Actual Jan 23 No of ECHPs	Current Sep 23* No of EHCPs	<i>Safety Valve Jan 24 Estimated No of EHCPs</i>
Under 5s	531	676	365	488
Age 5 to 10	5,688	5,570	5,295	5,747
Age 11 to 15	6,951	6,802	7,192	7,590
Age 16 to 19	3,958	3,820	4,320	4,123

Age 20 to 25	2,120	2,063	1,997	2,080
Total number of ECHPs	19,228	18,931	19,169	20,027

*Current age of child not calculated using SEN2 methodology

The Report in Detail

Agreement Condition #1			
Implement a countywide approach to 'Inclusion Education', to further build capacity in mainstream schools to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), thus increasing the proportion of children successfully supported in mainstream education and reducing dependence on specialist provision;			
Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Green	Amber	RAG
<p>The percentage of Children and Young People (CYP) with an EHCP in specialist provision has increased from 2022 with August 2023 figures showing: Year R-6 at 39% (2022: 37.7%), Year 7-11 57.5% (2022: 56.3%) and Year 12-14 39.6% (2022: 38.4%). This is disappointing as much work has been undertaken with schools to improve their inclusivity and the new County Approaches to Inclusion Education (CATIE) has been published and has gone public. A Steering group is being established and terms of reference are being written to monitor the progress and ensure the CATIE is implemented. A mainstream head teacher is being recruited as chair. Dates for monthly steering group meetings are being set for 2023/2024 and first meeting is scheduled for 21st Sept. The first CATIE annual strategic Education report, which will focus upon the four CATIE priorities, is being drafted ready for that meeting. The new CATIE strategy makes a commitment to having a Monitoring and Evaluation Group with the focus of KCC shifting more towards evaluation efforts. The public availability of the CATIE document marks a significant positive milestone.</p> <p>The district dashboard, which covers all 12 districts supporting the CATIE initiative, is now live and accessible for schools. A recent survey of current users looking at this reveal overall satisfaction with this resource. This dataset has been updated with the latest integrated information and is primarily intended for internal staff use, given that schools possess their own comprehensive and continually updated data.</p> <p>The EEFfective Kent Project supports low level interventions and whole class / school approaches to support quality first teaching and inclusive practice, The project is near its conclusion and there are multiple tasks at hand, including wrapping up funding and data-related matters and an ongoing effort to consolidate schools' involvement in the project for inclusion in the final report. The envisioned longer-term outcomes of this project include embedding evidence-based decision-making practices at the core of school improvement efforts. Furthermore, there's ongoing work towards sustainability beyond the project's lifespan.</p>			

The Council is transitioning to the full implementation phase of the Enquiries Hubs, which has been live since April. The ultimate outcome is to provide a SEND inquiry service that enhances communication with parents, offers information about early assistance and accessible support, empowers families, and reduces the necessity for later, more intrusive and less effective interventions.

Discussions continue to align the Inclusion Leadership Executives (ILEs) part of the local operational model working within each district which included analysis of The Mainstream Schools core training offer, which when complete will be discussed with school stakeholder groups during the Autumn Term.

Agreement Condition #2

Introduce a robust Special Educational Need (SEN) offer for early years, following a review, which explores alternatives to special school admission before Key Stage 2 (KS2), SEN redesign and implementation of County Approaches to Inclusive Education (CAIIE) to support consistent mainstream offer, including leadership development programmes, peer review and core training offer

Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Amber	Amber	RAG

Key recommendations from the Early Years Review have been drafted and shared with the reference group for feedback and presented to the internal Operational Group 2 on 9th August. Reports for each deep dive area are being drafted for September with an options appraisal then developed for each deep dive area. The key areas for in-depth analysis, include pathways, SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) and Local Inclusion Forum Teams (LIFT) processes, school readiness, sufficiency planning, and specialist intervention nurseries. Our research partner has also presented their findings and recommendations for commissioners and are in the process of finalising their report which will go to SEND Operational group 2 this month.

Whilst these reports are being produced and recommendations drafted, which we will share in December's report, work has continued on data analysis and financial costings for current placements which will demonstrate the full financial impact of each child placed into a specialist provision at age 5 and remaining there until they complete their education. It is anticipated that this information, once shared, will ensure any decisions are made with a full understanding of the longer-term financial impact and at a seniority level within KCC to undertake these decisions.

KCC have also entered into an agreement with "*Dingleys Promise*" (a company that provides Under 5s SEND services) to support inclusion training and has proven success within other local authorities. Initial meetings have taken place and scoping will take place to see some work in practice within other authorities.

The helpful information sent from DfE last quarter has been forwarded and the recommendations will be integrated into those emanating from the Early Years review from September onwards. Work to investigate the referrals and the place of our specialist intervention nurseries is also forming part of the review, so we will report further in our December monitoring report.

Agreement Condition #3

Review the system of Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments and annual reviews to ensure robustness, transparency, and consistency, through use of consistent criteria and practice framework

Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Green	Amber	RAG

The number of initial requests for needs assessment has increased to 340 for July 2023, up from 302 in July 2022. With Yes/No decisions percentages averaging 62%/38% which is a change from the 50%/50% during similar months of 2022. The decision to issue of an EHCP has also increased from an average of Yes/No of 80%/20% to 94%/6% in 2023. There are currently 1,001 cases open over 20 weeks with a decreasing percentage issued within timescale. This performance will be impacting the overall number of EHCPs as stated in the summary section.

Despite some good planning about the direction the Management Information System Change workstream should take, and how work with the service will achieve this, work has not moved forward as expected. Sign off of the specific wording of questions/fields within the SEND Assessment Decision Form on Gateway has been escalated to board level, to ensure it is completed within the next month. However, this has pushed the timeline back from the originally projected March 23 milestone. As the idea was to use this form as a test to see how complicated digitising the EHCP would be, this will also push back any work that can be done on this significantly, so our original projection of having something up and running by the new academic year has not happened.

The SEND service has been working closely with the Continuous Improvement (CI) team (internal team within KCC to improve performance & processes) to embed and evaluate process improvements, to ensure process improvements from the 4 previous CI team projects are embedded and having the intended impact within the SEN service has started. These 4 projects relate to:

- improved compliance with timescales
- reduce workload related to assessments and annual reviews
- improved quality of decision making and efficient use of resources
- improved communication practices within the assessment teams.

Continued work to fully staff the teams that process EHCP shows approximately 20 posts remain to be filled, with interviews scheduled for most. A staff monitoring app has been developed and is in user acceptance testing phase to assist with management of staff vacancies in real time.

Working through the backlog of Annual Review cases continues at pace with an

agreement to extend the size and duration of this team to increase the pace of clearing these, as those annual reviews waiting over 12 months currently stand at 11,970. The number of plans being ceased each month has seen a large rise across 2023 compared to the same months in previous years, with 136 plans ceased each month on average this year compared to 58 plans ceased each month on average in the past three years. There were 25 more plans issued (979) than ceased (954) over 2023 to end of July 2023 and even recognising the slow down in the number of EHCP needs assessments completed, this is still a marked improvement and helping to stabilise the number of EHCPs as estimated in the Safety Valve profile.

The pilot Quality Assurance Audit and Moderation Cycle has entered its 3rd and final stage, months five and six (July and August), during the previous cycle of the audits allocated there was 100% completion rate. The current challenge, as with introducing any audit and moderation cycle into an organisation, is that compliance can be a challenge as the practice and tools are unfamiliar, further work on culture and performance management will challenge this noncompliance moving forward.

The SEN redesign is well into its implementation phase, recruitment drives have been strong, and the teams will be at, or almost at, capacity for September. It is important to note that this is as a direct result of 'widening' the recruitment field, which in turn means that there are additional training and handover implications (i.e. new starters have skills required but may not yet have SEN understanding and knowledge of processes). The Quality Assurance (QA) team are developing a full training programme, which will support mitigation of this impact and there is a planned handover from experienced staff to new staff to ensure continuity and quality of service to families. The joint working between the Analytics team and the SEND service means that we will be able to accurately demonstrate where, and how far, new systems and processes are working. This is an essential short-term piece of work to ensure specific teams have a coherent, workable and affordable structure, and that team members have a sound understanding of their role. It will also afford the opportunity for training of managers, enable them to have the time to 'manage' their teams more effectively.

The SEND Handbook work is progressing, having collated all feedback from focus groups and made formatting and changes to the language in the current version. The updated version will be available later this month to go to the design team and then be shared with parent and school focus groups.

A new piece of work has started to integrate the EHCP annual review process and the annual reviews for children and young People (CYP) known to the Children Social Care teams. The project is seeking to develop two pilots to establish processes to integrate the Annual Review for Kent Children in Care (CiC) and Children in Need (CiN) under the disability teams. The CiC pilot will aim to integrate the Annual Review with one of the three Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings held per year and the CiN pilot will aim to integrate this with one of CiN Review meetings. This will offer a better experience to these CYP, their families and professionals in a more streamlined and efficient way. Children

and young people for the pilot have been identified; and a letter has been prepared to be issued to all Headteachers involved during the Autumn term 2023 informing them of the Project and the aims and objectives of it.

Agreement Condition #4

Implement models of reintegration of children from special/independent schools to mainstream where needs have been met;

Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Red	Red	RAG

A new project has been began working with (initially) 3 maintained special schools to identify cohorts of children with ASD who are most likely to benefit from either transition or dual role transition into maintained school to offer them a broader range of GCSEs at KS4. Starting with children in YR8 and working with parents and professionals a pathway is being sought for their supported transition. This will increase capacity within the special school and eliminate a potential transfer into independent provision.

Following this pilot, the plan is to roll this out more widely to other schools, year groups and need types.

Further discussions are underway with SEN managers to identify other work to support this reintegration work and it is the focus of a dedicated discussion at the next (internal) SEND Strategic Transformation Board on 19th September, so we can agree some rapid targeted interventions.

Agreement Condition #5

Develop a robust Post-16 offer across the county with clear pathways to independence for children with SEN, through increased Post-16 opportunities for preparing for adulthood

Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Green	Green	RAG

The Strategic Board for 16-19 *Pathways For All* met in late June, reviewing their progress nine months in, gathering information from stakeholders on the best ways forward. A conference has been agreed for the Autumn and communications have been distributed summarising the event.

Pathways to Independence sufficiency planning has made good progress, further discussions with individual colleges (now all three colleges) have taken place to look at which 'quick win' pathways they could undertake. There has been much 'buy in' from the colleges and offers of support such as video making to improve parental confidence. All three projects, when implemented effectively, will lead to significant cost avoidance through using FE colleges rather than independent providers further away. This is also being integrated to the *Pathways for All* below Level 2 work. Work with Special School Sixth forms interested in being a part of the discussions is being explored, as is the role of Specialist Post 16 Institutions. This project will be taken up by the replacement Safety Valve lead and will also include input from the new Post 16 Manager once in post and trained.

The financial impact of the work to Prioritise Annual Review cases relating to 16 to 19 independent sector transition has been estimated to achieve approximately £1.4m annual cost savings to date, to inform phase 2 of the work which includes a potential broader remit and work across different age ranges. This is included in the forecast.

Following concerns with the current performance of the contract, an alternative proposal by the provider for the supported employment offer for mainstream school has been approved and the contract variation form has been signed by KCC and provider, with proposals ready to commence. It is hoped this will increase take up from schools.

Agreement Condition #6

Develop the Transition Charter to increase parental confidence in Kent's provision. This involves working with schools to enable them to articulate the provision pathways for parents clearly and provide support to both children and parents at key transition points;

Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Green	Green	RAG

The dates for phase transfer have been published to Head Teachers and have been written into the Transition framework which will be published on KELSI (which is an online resource for education professionals in Kent, provided by Kent County Council) by the end of September. The purpose of the framework is to outline what activity needs to happen and when, in order for the service to be compliant. A planning session was held on 11th Sept with all service providers with responsibility for transition to plan their activity for schools with clear roles and responsibilities and to make use of the resources and commissioned services already in the system. The session was led by school leaders to ensure that service providers understood the mainstream context and to develop wider collaboration. The focus of the activity is cohort driven to enhance the confidence of mainstream settings to meet a greater variety and complexity of needs and to support conversations with parents before they are required to make school choices. The next phase is for the service providers to submit their plans to contribute further to expectations around transition.

The communications and engagement strategy has been completed and shared and individual teams are now developing their own communications delivery plans to align with this work.

A new process and form have been developed for Phase Transfer 2024/25 intake which shows over 930 parental preferences were received via the new submission process by the initial deadline, increasing the potential for timely consultation with schools. We have informed schools of panel timings well ahead of time to ensure key staff members' availability and to ensure better quality outcomes. We have also made improvements in data quality monitoring.

An extension to the existing contract for the Mainstream Core Standards for Parents & Family Engagement Award has been made to accommodate training for Middle Leaders, Governors, and Teachers while we continue to explore longer-term training options from March 2024.

Agreement Condition #7

Ensure there is sufficient and consistent capacity across the county to support children with severe and complex needs in their local area where possible. This includes recruitment of temporary posts to support sufficiency planning, reviewing the use of Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) and reviewing the specialist continuum to ensure only the most severe and complex needs are supported in special schools

Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Amber	Amber	RAG

The purpose of developing the new Education Resource Directory is to consolidate all information and training resources for educational settings into a single accessible platform. The anticipated outcome is an improvement in parental confidence regarding mainstream schools' ability to address the needs of children and young people with SEND. This project spans a six-month duration starting in July 2023, with the potential for an extension (if required) to ensure successful program completion. The recent re-procurement of External Tuition services to improve the quality and performance of offer has recently been completed with new contracts expected to be awarded and mobilisation of supports to commence imminently. The next stage is to work with providers and SEND colleagues to establish a pathway through this service and into a suitable educational establishment as quickly as possible, whilst improving children's outcomes.

Capacity within the Education Programme for Internal Tuition: has increased from 61 to 82 CYP at any one time. Recruitment efforts continue, though challenges persist. Proposed amendments to KPIs are under discussion, which are imperative to develop a seamless pathway to onward educational establishments. Much like External Tuition, there is work that needs to be done to develop a pathway through this service to a suitable onward educational establishment. This is urgent and would enable internal tuition service to support more CYP in total through the year than it can at present, whilst also ensuring children reach their destination as quickly as possible.

Over the last month, we have finalised the access agreements for Medway Unitary Authority (a neighbour authority also part of the safety valve programme) for our Non Maintained Independent Special Schools (NMISS) DPS (Dynamic Purchasing System), along with finalising contracts for recently evaluated schools. The next stage is to update the DPS placement tool (to support SEN placement officers in identifying suitable local placements), as well as extensive training and culture change to drive usage of that tool. There is also work regarding development of training materials for new staff induction. Recently the behaviour of some DPS schools has been not what expected, so

Commissioning will be supporting conversations with schools to drive culture change with them regarding our new ways of working. There is also work to be done regarding embedding processes to manage fee uplift requests for spot-purchased schools. This needs to be managed carefully to avoid negatively impacting DPS schools.

The new contract and service level agreement (SLA) for all Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) holding schools in Kent has been finalised following receipt of legal advice. The new contracts and SLAs will be issued to all schools across terms one and two of the academic year 2023/24. New arrangements have strengthened the governance which have included a review of the KPIs and a requirement for schools to be visited by Inclusion Advisors at least once a year. There is a requirement under the new reporting mechanism for schools to be transparent over how SEN notional budget is being spent. We have engaged a working group of schools to support the development of a model that can work for schools, parents and KCC. The new contract and SLA will be destination focused under the new monitoring arrangements and we should see that SRPs are effectively supporting children and young people with EHCPs to be educated within a mainstream setting.

There have been meetings with internal and external stakeholders to discuss the expansion of Rosewood school and a case and rationale are being drafted at KS3/4 and to align with the school's vision offer a KS5 provision. A surveyor was due to visit during August 2023, but this has been delayed.

The Special School Review is broadly on track in accordance with the revised timescale with the Governance process concluding in Cabinet decision-making in January 2024. The data to enable forecasting of child population forecast data and strategically planning the number of places over a 5–10-year period has started. Consultants have been engaging with special schools with all special schools taking the opportunity for a one-to-one conversation. These conversations provided the opportunity for individual head teachers to share their views about the future of special school places and provision, including a view about the relationship between KCC and the special schools.

Further development of research within the SEN Sufficiency Plan project, including data sets analysis to understand current SEND sufficiency provision offer for CYP with an EHCP across Kent has taken place. This aligns with the project work for the Special School (including provisions analysis) and SRP reviews, with involvement in Pathways for All – the offer below level 2 and KCC and FE and a local solution for all EHCP Learners Across Kent. We are collaborating with new special school review external consultants to support their gap analysis exercise. At the end of August 2023 there were 206 young people with an EHCP who had no current placement, mostly in the 16+ age group (144) with 61 school age and 1 Preschool.

Agreement Condition #8

Develop a school/area-led approach to commissioning of SEN support services (Locality Based Resources), to better respond to the needs of children and young people with SEND

Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Green	Green	RAG

The consultation for the Localities model is being prepared and will formally launch on 15th November 2023 until 8th January 2024. Consultants have been sourced to support with writing the model to ensure deadlines are adhered to. The consultation is on a model whereby all schools (special and mainstream and cross phase) will work together in defined clusters to have decision making influence over a pre-determined sum of money from the High Needs Block. This will support the inclusion of more children in mainstream schools. The model of governance being consulted on also includes the impact of resource which is already in the system. This model will include the development of a tariff type system to support identification of children with more complex needs who may require more specialist resources. Further external support has been sought to develop this element of the system. The Kent PACT (Parents and Carers Together) Memorandum of Understanding meeting on 30/06/2023 went ahead and additional representatives were included by Kent PACT from EK360 (a community interest company specialising in exper engagement and based in Kent) and (National Network of Parent Carer Forums) NNPCF. A decision was made to re-title the MoU as a Collaboration Agreement, reflecting the positive shifts in Kent PACT's approach to partnership and engagement with parent/carers moving forward. The Agreement is as robust as the MoU and includes an agreed Development and Engagement Plan. The funding will remain the same for 2023/24 and will then be reviewed. Commissioning will manage the Collaboration Agreement with Quarterly and Annual Reviews.

Agreement Condition #9

Continue working closely with NHS Kent and Medway to ensure a common understanding of SEND needs, including the drivers behind increases in need, ensuring clarity of clinical assessment and the subsequent funding associated.

Assurance Level	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Amber	Amber	RAG

The joint funded placement review project is progressing well, with the project having reached 70% completion. While there are some minor issues related to pathway clarification and decision-making processes, these are being addressed. The first quarter report indicates an additional £1.2 million of NHS income has been secured through the project, benefiting both SEN and Social Care. Further work is being undertaken on the reclaim process from NHS to ensure this is done in a timelier manner.

Over the past month, there has been limited progress in the SEN therapies qualified provider list initiative. The evaluation of new submissions has concluded, and efforts are underway for the contract award and onboarding of new suppliers. The Qualified Provider List (QPL) is operating as intended. However, challenges persist regarding capacity within SEN to manage off-contract spend. Despite ongoing efforts, this situation remains unchanged due to higher priority work like the Therapies Review.

Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN) Transformation - Balanced System Scheme accreditation meetings were held for seven schools, all of which have been recommended for Balanced System Scheme for Schools and Settings accreditation. Notably, two schools have been proposed as Centers of Excellence, awaiting ratification. The ongoing mentoring and Community of Practice events for the 2022 cohort of schools and settings are aimed at enhancing the understanding of evidencing the impact of SLCN provisions. Updates were delivered at the Early Years Professional Seminar and support is being extended towards transition for a full Balanced System offer. Additionally, collaboration with NHS Providers (Medway Community Healthcare) MCH and Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT) has led to Tests for Change launches in new schools.

Thrive Initiative: Our involvement in the development of "Have Your Say" pages, featuring five key questions, continues in collaboration with Integrated Children's Board (Health). The purpose is to gather input from children, young people, parents/carers, and practitioners on the future Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWB and MH) model for Kent.

Mental Health Initiatives: Progress has been made within various mental health initiatives. The i-THRIVE framework has been agreed upon by the Pathways for

All MH group. The next step involves seeking approval from the Kent governance board. Discovery and evidence gathering for a new care model have commenced. We also delivered an introduction to i-THRIVE to the KCSMP project group on August 3, 2023. The Try Angle Awards finals event on July 3, 2023, celebrated the achievements of young people, including those with SEND, resulting in excellent profile films. This along with the whole school nurture service program is consistently making commendable progress and on track.

Risk	Assurance Level		
Risk 1: Early Years forecast continues to be outside anticipated numbers	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Amber	Amber	RAG
<p>Mitigation:</p> <p>Deep dive draft reports will be presented, including options appraisals to avoid greater numbers of children entering special schools in KS1 are being developed. Further engagement opportunities with partners have been identified and planned for September. Sharing insight from Early Years and Special Schools Review with Place Group in September and a decision-making governance timetable has been established. We will ensure that proportionate, representative engagement on options is completed in September, ensuring that outcomes of the Early Years review reflect and take into consideration outcomes from interdependent projects. Further actions are recorded under agreement 2.</p>			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>On track to present options during September</p>			
Risk	Assurance Level		
Risk 2: Data quality within SEND service is not where we need it to be despite work to change this much is dependent upon culture change and an understanding of the criticality of this so will take time to embed and in the meantime, we are working with inaccurate data	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	RED	RED	RAG
<p>Mitigation:</p> <p>Shared presentation with the Council's Management Information Unit delivered to Strategic Board to highlight this issue. Risk owner allocated to Assistant Director SEND Process. The Quality Assurance team, led by an Assistant Director, is working to improve the quality of data and identify mitigation actions to be taken.</p>			

The Assistant Director, Operations and her team checking highlighted as missing from case study work. Guidance created for what is to be recorded where and expectations on the input and use into the “Synergy” education management system. The Assistant Director (Quality Assurance) has become a standing member of the Synergy Operations Group. Set Phase Transfer as an initial model to show the benefits and identifying principles for other aspects of the service. Implementation of monthly data quality meetings with area managers to drive ownership amongst teams and correcting these errors, initially will be bi-weekly to drive change. Project plan has been developed with 4 workstreams identified to improve the quality of data across Synergy. Data quality project is in development and will complement the county-wide work being led by QA team

Progress update:

Good progress is being made across all mitigations although the pace of culture change is slow to implement all new processes

Risk	Assurance Level		
Risk 3: The impact of only being successful for only 2 of the 3 new special schools requested, via the DFE Special Schools Safety Valve Capital Programme, is forcing more placements into the independent sector at much greater expense	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Amber	Amber	RAG

Mitigation:

This is a medium-term risk as safety valve profiles assumed the school would have a phased opening from September 2025.

Future mitigations will be considered in line with the review of the capital strategy for High Needs. This in turn will be informed by the sufficiency plans and outcome of the mainstream/Specialist provision and special school review.

Risk	Assurance Level		
Risk 4: Risk Other Local Authorities will no longer accept or continue to fund their looked after children placed in Kent. Kent is a significant net importer	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Amber	Amber	RAG

of Looked After Children.			
<p>Mitigation:</p> <p>The impact of DfE guidance on the treatment of looked after children is outside the control of KCC, nor is it possible for KCC to “stop” other local authorities placing children in Kent. Concerned other local authorities could see this as an “easy” saving and so no longer agreeing to fund. Kent will continue to respond to any consultations on this matter and keep up to date with guidance issued. KCC may choose to escalate to DfE if other local authorities do not consider KCC’s local context (of being a significant importer of looked after children). Our latest analysis showed we had over 500 EHCPs relating to Other Local Authority Looked After Children spread over 80 local authorities.</p> <p>Kent is reviewing its processes in relation to other local authorities in line with the DfE guidance.</p>			
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>This will be kept under review.</p>			

Risk	Assurance Level		
Risk 5: Financial instability of state-funded special schools	Update 1 (May/June)	Update 2 (September)	Update 3 (December)
	Amber	Amber	RAG
<p>Mitigation:</p> <p>KCC representatives across Schools Finance, SEN, School Improvement and Area Education Officers have been working with special schools with forecast deficit reserves within the next three years, the most significant being a year 1 deficit of £800k. The aim is to understand the main drivers of these deficits and what actions can be taken within the school in first instance without the requirement for additional funding. Maintained Special School 3-year plans are indicating most will have exhausted the majority of their reserves within three years, and this has largely been as a result of funding increases (minimum 3.4%) being insufficient to cover increases in support staff wages (which rose closer to inflation of 10%) - this has impacted special schools to a greater extent than mainstream schools due to the higher use of support staff. A funding review is being undertaken as part of the wider special schools review, but it will not be implemented until April 2025 and there is unlikely to be significant extra funding to support higher increases, therefore the focus will be ensuring a more transparent and sustainable funding model that enables schools to plan more readily. In the meantime, shorter-term options are being considered within the context of safety</p>			

valve financial expectations.