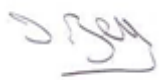



## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

LA Name	Date Report Submitted	Name & Email Address of Key Personnel	
Kent County Council	02.04.2025	CEO:	Amanda Beer
		S151 Officer:	John Betts
Signed off by S151 Officer	Signed off by Director of Children's Services	DCS:	Sarah Hammond
		Other key contacts for Safety Valve:	Christine McInnes Karen Stone Samantha Sheppard

Is your LA's Safety Valve plan on track?	Yes/No	Commentary
To achieve the Safety Valve agreement's projected deficit in the current year?	No	<p>Our overall financial position remains unchanged from the November 2024 report. We are not expecting to meet the Safety Valve target of an in-year overspend on the Designated Schools Grant (DSG) of £29.9m (before additional contributions from the Safety Valve or Local Authority (LA) contributions). Instead we are forecasting an in-year overspend of around £53m. However, because we were ahead of our cumulative plan, this has resulted in a circa £10m shortfall of our planned accumulated deficit position as at March 2025.</p> <p>The overall reasons for this variance remain broadly unchanged with the overall number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continuing to remain relatively in line with forecasts and the key concern being the placement of children and associated costs.</p> <p>The main areas of total variance against our original plan are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstream top-ups (for both children with and without an EHCP) – total number and average amount.</li> <li>• Independent schools – average cost.</li> <li>• Additional requests from Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs) and special schools for “exceptional pupil need”.</li> <li>• Demand for home tuition and Education Other Than At School.</li> <li>• Due to high inflation and increasing national living wage standard increases for state-funded settings (schools and post 16) were set 1% higher than originally expected in the plan.</li> <li>• Delay in opening of new Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) need special school (from September 2024 to January 2025) due to late change in Trust leadership.</li> </ul> <p>The original plan also assumed two of the three new special schools applied for would have begun a phased opening by now (on the basis of an accelerated programme), however these are unlikely to open until September 2027 at the earliest.</p>

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

To achieve a £0 DSG deficit by the end of the Safety Valve agreement?	No	<p>The profile has been updated to reflect the latest forecast. This is currently under review, whilst we reflect on the latest forecast position for 2024-2025 and other actions that could be implemented.</p> <p>The Council continues to aim for a breakeven in-year position with the in-year deficit reducing over the next few years.</p> <p>The medium term forecast reflects our intention to identify and implement further actions designed to have a more immediate effect (over the next 12-18 months) to help mitigate the additional costs resulting from higher placements costs (due to inflation, market conditions and additional support). These need to deliver savings of at least £5-7m a year.</p> <p>We are still are not confident the position can be recovered sufficiently by 2027-2028 to counteract the costs incurred from delays in the building of two new special schools (and the rejection of the bid for a third special school) as set out in previous reports, leaving a residual balance of at least £30m.</p>
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Is your LA's Safety Valve capital project on track?	Yes/No	Commentary
	No	The original Safety Valve assumptions included new schools in Swanley and Whitstable to be delivered by the Department for Education opening from September 2024 (now unlikely to open until September 2027 at the earliest) and a further school on Isle of Sheppey to open from September 2025 (this was rejected by Department for Education). These have been delayed and it is unclear when work will commence.

### Programme Headlines

This quarter, the biggest drivers of positive change have been (up to 3):

- Embedded practice with regard to decision making on Requests to Assess is yielding consistent positive impact in relation to the number of Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments taking place and the number of plans issued. In addition, the number of plans issued within 20 week statutory guidelines has consistently improved and, as of February 2025, stands at 89.9%.
- Ongoing and focused engagement with education colleagues in mainstream schools alongside increased levels of open and transparent communication is increasing educators' understanding of the changes being implemented within the education system in Kent, the underpinning reasons for these changes, and the roles that all parties have in addressing these challenges to improve outcomes for children and young people while creating a financially sustainable Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system moving forward. This is increasing the level of constructive challenge and debate from the sector and building improving collaborative relationships with the Local Authority. (See stakeholder engagement below)

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

This quarter, the biggest barrier(s) to successful implementation of the Safety Valve plan have been (up to 3):

- The underpinning premise of the Safety Valve plan is built around greater inclusion of children and young people with SEND in mainstream settings, enabling best use of places within maintained special schools and reducing reliance on more costly, non-maintained and / or independent school placements. Kent's approach focuses on system recalibration rather than imposing cuts to mainstream funding or large scale movement of children and young people from specialist into mainstream settings. Whilst KCC's approach is to support all settings to fulfil their own statutory duties with regard to SEND, this recalibration of the education system is taking some time to implement and embed. Coming at a time of increasing national financial stringency, leaders of mainstream settings, in particular, are concerned about the affordability of being inclusive and special schools who are concerned about how to best meet the needs of a changing cohort of children and young people within their existing buildings and curriculums.
- In terms of system recalibration, the time taken to complete Democratic processes was not accounted for in the original timescales or projections of when benefits would be realised in a number of Safety Valve areas. Since the beginning of the programme five public and other targeted consultations have been undertaken to inform the development of models enabling system recalibration, and six Key Decisions have been taken by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to enable this change. In addition reports related to the recalibration of SEND services in Kent have been presented to four Scrutiny Committee meetings (September 2024, November 2024, January 2025 and March 2025). This includes two reports on the Safety Valve (January and March 2025) and a call in of the Cabinet Member's decision on the Special School Review (January 2025). During the autumn of 2024, Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of SEND and the conclusions and recommendations were reported at the November 2024 meeting. This level of local accountability has required a significant investment of senior officer time as well as slowing progress towards meeting targets.
- The nature of the Safety Valve agreement means that there is no formal opportunity to review the original financial projections over the five year period of the agreement. This means that increases in inflation, national living wage and teachers pay and the resultant increase in the costs of delivering education provision to children and young people continue to be a source of challenge. The unit costs of provision in areas such as independent schools, including non-maintained independent schools, and tuition are increasing both for existing and new places in a way that could not have been foreseen when the original financial modelling was undertaken.

This quarter, the best examples of stakeholder engagement around the Safety Valve plan have been (up to 3):

- The most recent round of countywide state-funded school headteacher briefings has seen the highest levels of attendance to date, with representatives from circa two thirds of schools in Kent attending. Area briefings held in mid-March saw representatives from over 84 schools attend. This included presentations from a selection of primary, secondary and special schools, as well as a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), sharing how they are driving the inclusion agenda forward in their setting. Increasing the level of sharing of practitioner-led practice is proving an effective way of driving improvement.
- Engagement with the education sector through both implementation of the early years revised model of support and the Communities of Schools for statutory education has

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

been continuous throughout this quarter. Clear and transparent information sharing is enabling education colleagues to understand the changes being implemented, the underpinning rationale and giving them opportunity to question, challenge and comment to ensure that their feedback is heard and accounted for within the developing models. Over this quarter, Local Authority officers have attended six Early Years Provider Briefing and Networking Sessions to share information about the revised model of support for early years settings, and are preparing to deliver ten training sessions regarding revised processes. Chairs from Communities of Schools have met to discuss and agree Terms of Reference and Codes of Conduct for the groups. In addition, financial modelling of the estimated budget available for local decision making has been shared.

- Inclusion Champions continue to work across a range of projects to provide insight, advice and challenge. This includes development of the Continuum of Needs and Provision, Communities of Schools, the SEN High Needs Funding model and, soon, work to support Year R of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the re-procurement of the framework contract for non-maintained and independent special schools.

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Alongside your Safety Valve financial and narrative monitoring reports, please share with us the latest strategic data dashboard utilised by your governance oversight board for Safety Valve.

**NB** This should not be something created for the DfE Safety Valve monitoring process; if you do not have a strategic data dashboard, just let us know.

Monthly Indicators		Latest Month												
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	Data Source	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25
Percentage of young people in year R-6 with an EHCP in specialist provision	MI	38.8	38.0	37.3	37.0	36.5	36.1	34.9	34.6	38.0	37.7	37.5	37.3	37.4
Percentage of young people in year 7-11 with an EHCP in specialist provision	MI	55.8	55.4	55.0	54.6	54.4	53.9	52.1	51.4	54.2	54.0	53.9	53.9	54.1
Percentage of young people in year 12-14 with an EHCP in specialist provision	MI	39.2	39.1	39.1	39.1	38.9	38.8	38.1	36.5	39.7	40.0	-	-	-
Percentage of young people in year 12-14 with an EHCP in specialist provision excl SPI	MI	-	28.2	28.1	28.1	27.9	27.7	26.8	25.3	25.7	25.8	25.9	26.1	26.3
Percentage of young people in year 12-14 with an EHCP in SPI	MI	-	10.7	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.9	10.8	10.7	11.7	11.8	12.0	12.3	12.5
Percentage of School Age CYP (Yr R to Yr13) with an EHCP who are in a mainstream setting	MI	41.0	41.2	41.7	41.9	41.9	42.1	42.0	41.9	40.6	40.7	41.1	41.0	40.6
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 (CAIE) to support consistent mainstream offer, including leadership development programmes, peer review and core training offer														
Overall number of EHCPs at EY/KS1	MI	2,338	2,440	2,563	2,665	2,816	2,952	3,113	2,265	2,357	2,430	2,482	2,525	2,578
Percentage of EY/KS1 moving into Special/Independent	MI	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	10.7	0.6	0.4	0.2	1.0
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														
Number of EHCP requests agreed at Assessment stage	MI	212	92	148	138	137	142	166	127	52	117	155	211	219
Percentage of EHCP requests agreed at Assessment stage	MI	55.6	30.8	37.0	36.5	40.2	42.8	45.7	39.6	41.9	47.2	43.2	50.1	51.0
Number of EHCP requests declined at Assessment stage	MI	169	207	252	240	204	190	196	194	72	131	204	210	210
Percentage of EHCP requests declined at Assessment stage	MI	44.4	69.2	63.0	63.5	59.8	57.2	54.3	60.4	58.1	52.8	56.8	49.9	49.0
Number of EHCP requests agreed at Issue stage	MI	203	155	178	187	204	184	174	156	142	201	142	131	163
Percentage of EHCP requests agreed at Issue stage	MI	80.6	68.3	78.1	82.0	80.6	84.0	84.1	80.4	81.1	88.2	80.2	81.4	74.4
Number of EHCP requests declined at Issue stage	MI	49	72	50	41	49	35	33	38	33	27	35	30	56
Percentage of EHCP requests declined at Issue stage	MI	19.4	31.7	21.9	18.0	19.4	16.0	15.9	19.6	18.9	11.8	19.8	18.6	25.6
The number of needs assessments currently underway	MI	2,047	1,828	1,704	1,476	1,306	1,148	1,084	834	812	944	1,063	1,168	1,158
Percentage of Annual Reviews Overdue	MI	51.1	48.9	47.6	44.5	41.8	39.0	36.9	35.4	34.4	34.1	34.3	35.0	37.5
Number of Annual Reviews overdue	MI	9,961	9,598	9,402	8,853	8,363	7,855	7,438	7,128	6,975	6,983	7,043	7,219	7,765

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Agreement Condition 4: Implement models of reintegration of children from Special/Independent schools to mainstream where needs have been met														
Number of CYP in Special/Independent moving into Mainstream - At Phase Transfer	MI	-	Reporting is unavailable for this KPI								-	-	-	-
Number of CYP in Special/Independent moving into Mainstream - At Annual Review	MI	-	""								-	-	-	-
Number of CYP in Mainstream moving into Special/Independent - At Phase Transfer	MI	-	""								-	-	-	-
Number of CYP in Mainstream moving into Special/Independent - At Annual Review	MI	-	""								-	-	-	-
Number in CYP in Special/Independent moving into Mainstream - Total (not split by AR or PT)	MI	3	2	3	6	2	0	3	0	172	4	4	1	4
Number of CYP in Mainstream moving into Special/Independent - Total (not split by AR or PT)	MI	37	21	17	24	24	34	29	9	621	49	50	36	72
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														
Percentage post 16 in Special/Independent	MI	37.2	36.8	37.1	36.8	37.0	37.2	35.8	39.3	36.8	36.3	36.1	36.0	35.9
Percentage post 16 in Mainstream inc FE colleges	MI	42.2	41.0	41.0	40.7	40.5	39.8	39.5	39.8	44.2	44.2	44.1	44.3	44.3
Percentage Annual Reviews that ceased 16-18 yr olds	MI	1.0	3.9	4.3	4.7	2.9	4.3	4.9	5.1	20.2	40.2	35.8	27.9	23.9
Percentage Annual Reviews that ceased 19 -25 yr olds	MI	96.8	91.4	94.8	95.3	94.5	92.4	85.9	89.2	66.6	43.5	40.3	43.7	25.2
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														
Phase transfer data, percentage placed in local provision and percentage in Special and Percentage independent	MI		Phase transfer data is unavailable as the PT app is not going to be used											
Tribunal data Number placed in Independent/Special after appeal	Tribunals Team		Reporting is unavailable for this KPI											

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

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## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
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.	Update 1 (April) <b>G</b>	<p>As noted in previous report (submitted November 2024) much of the project work undertaken to build capacity within mainstream settings has now closed with the expectation that impact, specifically a reduction in percentages of children and young people placed within specialist settings year R-13, will increase over the next few years of the Safety Valve programme.</p> <p>Performance data shows slow but steady progress in relation to this aim. Between January 2024 and January 2025 the percentage of children and young people in Years R-6 and Years 7– 11 with an EHCP in specialist settings has reduced by 1.4% and 1.7% respectively, the percentage of young people in Years 12-14 with an EHCP in specialist settings (including Specialist Provider Institutions (SPIs)) reduced by 0.4% and the percentage of children and young people in years R - 13 with an EHCP in mainstream reduced by 0.4%.</p> <p>Requests for Education Health and Care Needs statutory assessments fell by 10.7% between March 2024 and February 2025.</p> <p>Two projects in this area that closed and where impact is now being seen are the Whole School Nurture and Inclusive Leaders in Education training programmes which ended in 2024. An analysis undertaken in December 2024, comparing pre-training data (2018-2019) with academic year 2023-2024 data identified four areas of significant change including a significant decrease in the rate of EHCP requests per pupil between 2022- 2023 and 2023-2024, the rates of EHCP pupils were significantly lower in 2023-2024, compared to 2022-2023, in schools that participated in both the Whole School Nurture and Inclusive Leadership in Education. There was also a significant decrease in exclusion in the schools that participated in both the Whole School Nurture and Inclusive Leadership in Education. For the schools that participated in the training, there was a significant increase in the percentage of non-SEND pupils being severely absent from school.</p> <p>Another project in this area is the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS). As noted in the previous report, a public consultation was undertaken in September 2024 regarding the service and how it would fit into the future ways of working being implemented as part of the ongoing SEND transformation in Kent. The consultation was completed in</p>
	Update 2 (July) <b>RAG</b>	
	Update 3 (December ) <b>RAG</b>	
	<b>RAG</b>	

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

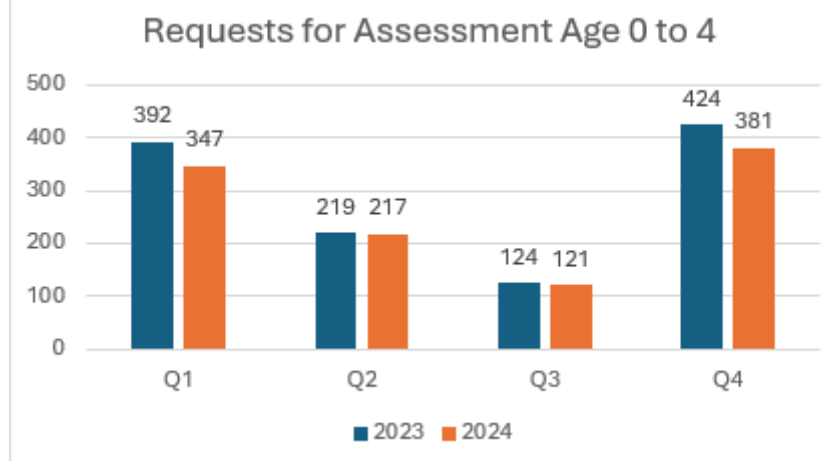
Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>November 2024 and received a total of 523 responses, 26% of which were from primary school Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). The consultation outlined how the service would be aligned to new ways of working being implemented through the Localities Model of School Inclusion (see Condition 8). Based on the outcomes of the consultation, a Key Decision was taken by Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to bring the service in house enabling greater alignment with existing Local Authority teams and increased financial stability for the service over the longer term (rather than managing 12 individual service level agreements).</p> <p>We are also strengthening the link between the Block Transfer from the Schools and the ongoing provision of Special Education Needs (SEN) Support services to further build accountability by the sector. We maintain the ambition to cease the Block Transfer but only when the High Needs Block is financially sustainable.</p> <p>The work to bring the service in house is on track and expected to be completed for a 1 September 2025 transfer.</p>
<b>Condition 2:</b> 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 (CATIE) to support consistent mainstream offer, including leadership development programmes, peer review and core training offer.	Update 1 (April)	<p>Data indicates that the number of EHCPs for young children continues to increase and that there has been a 10.27% increase in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans at Early Years Foundation Stage ((EYFS) pre-school and Year R)) and Key Stage (KS) 1 combined between January 2024 and January 2025.</p> <p>Data from February 2025 shows the total number of active EHCPs in EYFS and KS1 has increased by 96 from January 2025, to a total of 2,674.</p> <p>However, there are differences to be seen within this data set between children in EYFS and those in KS1. In relation to the above, 29% of active EHCPs are for children in the EYFS and 71% for children in KS1.</p> <p>Requests for assessment for children under the age of five years has decreased between 2023 and 2024 as illustrated below.</p>
	<b>G</b>	
	Update 2 (July)	
	<b>RAG</b>	
	Update 3 (December )	
	<b>RAG</b>	

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement  
Condition

Assurance  
Level

Progress Update from this Quarter  
*Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts*



In both 2023 and 2024, a peak number of requests for assessment for children under the age of five were received in November. In November 2023, 193 requests were received compared to 155 in November 2024, a decrease of 19.7% at that peak time. This indicates that there is a differential between activity in pre-school versus school age settings.

As noted in the November 2024 report, a Key Decision to implement a revised model of universal, targeted and specialist support for early years settings was taken in July 2024 and this decision is now being implemented.

Key features of the revised model include:

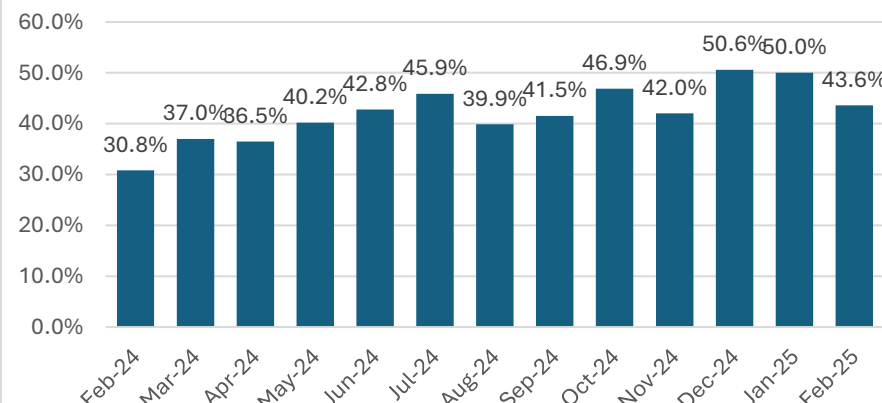
- a more readily accessible offer of universal support delivered through a link practitioner model and without the need for self-referral, enabling earlier identification of needs.
- support for children at a targeted level, filling a gap identified in the current model of support.
- specialist support available through an outreach model, aimed at building confidence and capacity within mainstream settings to support children with more complex needs.
- a new referral route to access support at targeted and specialist levels that reduces bureaucracy and focuses on allocating the appropriate support based on the needs of the child and their setting.

The implementation of the model begins in April 2025, when current activity stops and new structures begin, and will be fully implemented in September 2025 as all specialist nurseries move to the outreach model.

Feedback gathered from schools, early years providers and the data provided above suggests that Year R can be a critical time for young children and a point at which progress made in

SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE		
Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>nursery and childminder settings is lost, resulting in higher numbers of children with EHCPs in KS1.</p> <p>Following implementation of the outcomes from the early years review, this is now a key area of focus and additional support from SEN specialists provided as part of the Safety Valve programme, working alongside Inclusion Champions will focus on developing recommendations to address this and ensure that progress made is not lost in Year R of EYFS.</p>
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.	Update 1 (April)	<p>Embedded consistent and robust decision making is ensuring that progress continues to be maintained and built upon in this area.</p> <p>Casework teams are currently transitioning from county wide to area teams to support building of closer working relationships with schools and increased knowledge and understanding of the local education landscape.</p> <p>The transition from interim to permanent staff is also in train, representing an ongoing investment of £2m from the local authority in ensuring stability and ongoing progress in this area, bringing the total investment by the Council in SEN and Educational Psychology statutory services to £17.5m.</p> <p>In February 2025, the number of plans completed within 20 weeks increased to 89.9% from 53.5% in January 2025 and compared to 14.3% in February 2024.</p> <p>It is to be expected that this figure will fluctuate depending on the number of new requests being received throughout the year, however, this data does demonstrate significant progress made over the past 12 months.</p> <p>The percentage of decisions to assess remains relatively consistent as illustrated below.</p>
	G	
	Update 2 (July)	
	RAG	
	Update 3 (December )	
RAG		

Percentage of Decisions to Assess



Month	Percentage
Feb-24	30.8%
Mar-24	37.0%
Apr-24	36.5%
May-24	40.2%
Jun-24	42.8%
Jul-24	45.9%
Aug-24	39.9%
Sep-24	41.5%
Oct-24	46.9%
Nov-24	42.0%
Dec-24	50.6%
Jan-25	50.0%
Feb-25	43.6%

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>																												
		<p>Whereas the percentage of decisions to issue is more variable.</p> <div><p>Percentage of Decisions to Issue</p><table><thead><tr><th>Month</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Feb-24</td><td>69.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Mar-24</td><td>78.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Apr-24</td><td>82.2%</td></tr><tr><td>May-24</td><td>81.1%</td></tr><tr><td>Jun-24</td><td>84.3%</td></tr><tr><td>Jul-24</td><td>83.7%</td></tr><tr><td>Aug-24</td><td>80.4%</td></tr><tr><td>Sep-24</td><td>82.3%</td></tr><tr><td>Oct-24</td><td>87.7%</td></tr><tr><td>Nov-24</td><td>79.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Dec-24</td><td>81.6%</td></tr><tr><td>Jan-25</td><td>73.6%</td></tr><tr><td>Feb-25</td><td>72.9%</td></tr></tbody></table></div> <p>The percentage of annual reviews overdue was 37.5% as of January 2025 and while this has relatively stable over the past months, it does represent an improvement from January 2024 where the percentage stood at 51.1%. This means that 7,765 annual reviews are currently overdue compared to 9,961 in January 2024, a reduction of 22%.</p>	Month	Percentage	Feb-24	69.0%	Mar-24	78.0%	Apr-24	82.2%	May-24	81.1%	Jun-24	84.3%	Jul-24	83.7%	Aug-24	80.4%	Sep-24	82.3%	Oct-24	87.7%	Nov-24	79.0%	Dec-24	81.6%	Jan-25	73.6%	Feb-25	72.9%
Month	Percentage																													
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Feb-25	72.9%																													
Condition 4: Implement models of reintegration of children from special/independent schools to mainstream where needs have been met.	Update 1 (April)	<p>Over this quarter, the number of children moving from specialist into from mainstream settings continues to be low.</p> <p>With the exception of children moving at the point of phased transfer (September 2024) the number of children moving from special into mainstream settings remains relatively consistent with a range of 0-6 each month of the past year (average 2.6 per month). In comparison the number moving from mainstream into specialist is more variable with a range of 17 – 72 (average 33.5 per month) leading to a net increase.</p> <p>It is expected that over time retaining focus on ensuring that robust decisions are made at point of placement, phased transfer and annual review will ensure that more children and young people are able to transition from specialist into mainstream settings where appropriate.</p> <p>Changes to the SEN funding model to create more certainty and transparency of funding for our most complex children, and the introduction of Communities of Schools from April 2025, supporting mainstream schools to focus more on whole school SEN offers and to include children with higher levels of need in their settings, will provide the opportunity for more children to make the transition in mainstream.</p>																												
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	Update 2 (July)																													
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## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement  
Condition

Assurance  
Level

Progress Update from this Quarter  
*Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts*

In the meantime, targeted work to prioritise reviews of high cost Post-16 out of county placements, with a view to ceasing EHCPs where needs have been met or moving young people to a placement within Kent so that they can be educated locally and work to ensure fair and consistent decision making in regard to independent mainstream placements continue to yield positive outcomes.

In the academic year 2023-2024, 91 young people have completed their course at the end of an academic year and moved to an SPI in Kent for 2024-2025 academic year, with a saving of £280k per year expected.

In relation to the total number of placements, this continues to fall reducing the over number of placements that Kent might be asked to financially contribute to in the future.

The number of placements in independent schools that Kent is funding also continues to fall as illustrated below.

	2023-2024	Nov 24	Feb 24	Projected Sept 2025	Projected Sept 2026
<b>Total placements</b>	141	132	136	111	85
<b>Total Kent funded placements</b>	129	115	115	92	71

It is likely that the number of Kent funded placements will change if new placements are agreed through the tribunal process, however, the overall trend is positive and illustrates the benefits of increased consistency of decision making.

Where Kent is funding or contributing to the funding of placements, greater scrutiny at point of annual review of the learning support provided by the school compared to that outlined in the EHCP is ensuring that funding is only provided for support that is required to meet the ongoing needs of the child or young person.

In regard to independent placements, there is a risk that changes to the VAT that independent schools pay will increase the number of requests, from parents with children already placed in independent settings, to Kent to fund or part-fund these placements, including, for example, requests for new Education Health and Care needs assessments. In this instance, the mechanisms established through this project to ensure consistency of decision making and value for money will be fundamental to the agreement of any future requests.



## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
<b>Condition 5:</b> Develop a robust Post16 offer across the county with clear pathways to independence for children with SEN, through increased Post-16 opportunities for preparing for adulthood.	Update 1 (April) <b>A</b>	In relation to post-16 provision. The percentage of young people in special or independent and mainstream settings has remained relatively consistent over the past twelve months.
	Update 2 (July) <b>RAG</b>	However, the percentage of EHCPs ceased at point on Annual Review for both 16-18 and 19-25 year olds has been more variable.
	Update 3 (December ) <b>RAG</b>	Percentage annual reviews that ceased 16-18 year olds increased to 20.2% in September 24 (from 5.1% in August 2024), then to 40.2% (October 2024) before decreasing to 35.8% (November 2024), 27.9% (December 2024) and 23.9% (January 2025).
	<b>RAG</b>	The percentage of EHCPs ceased at point of Annual Review for young people 19-25 years was within a consistent range of approximately 90 - 95% until August 2024, and has since fallen consistently to 25.2% in January 2025.
		These reductions are due to the investment by the local authority in additional capacity to work through the backlog of annual reviews over the past two years.
		As a result of working with young people and their families to enable them to plan for access to work and/or training in order to develop their independence there has been an increase in the number of EHCP ceased for both 16-18 and post 19 cohorts.
		The numbers for Post 19 also represent data quality issues that have been rectified, alongside cases where young people were leaving their college placement to enter work.
		Given the complexities and challenges of Post-16 education in Kent, a Post-16 Coordination Group has been established. The group will focus understanding, mapping and aligning the educational provision and support available to young people aged 16-19, those up to 25 with an EHCP and those for whom the Council has a statutory obligation.
		The group will map all current projects and activity that impact on this cohort of young people to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure effective sharing of information and data.</li> <li>• Ensure alignment of outcomes.</li> <li>• Determine how implementation can be supported by members of the group.</li> <li>• Produce a Post-16 policy that brings together all Post-16 interdependences into one place.</li> </ul>

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>The group will also assess and review capital requests and provision proposals presented by the sector, matching these against data and intelligence held within the group regarding the need for growth of provision.</p> <p>The group will provide a forum for discussion and challenge around prospective new provision, with opportunities for financial modelling.</p> <p>The group will discuss how the local authority can influence and impact the curriculum offer for Post-16 EHCP provision in Kent, as this can be a significant barrier to mainstream inclusion for the Post-16 cohort.</p> <p>Initial meetings of the group have taken place, with mapping to be completed over the coming months along with production of a project plan identifying specific areas of opportunity that can support implementation of this Condition and associated timescales for demonstrating impact.</p>
<p><b>Condition 6:</b> 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.</p>	<p>Update 1 (April)</p>	<p>In Kent, the implementation of this phased transfer process for children moving into a different phase of education for the 2025–2026 academic year continues to build on learning from previous years.</p> <p>Section 9 of the SEND Code of Practice (2015) outlines the need to ensure that the EHCPs of children moving between early years providers to school and primary to secondary school are reviewed and any amendments completed by 15 February of the calendar year of the transfer. To allow sufficient time to achieve this, the review process starts in September of the previous calendar year. This means that, in essence, for children issued an EHCP after September of the previous calendar year, there is less time available to meet this deadline.</p> <p>Consequently, and in contrast to previous years, phased transfer data for 2025–2026 differentiates between outcomes for children with an EHCP issued prior to 27 September 2024 and those issued after (where the time between the date of issue and the statutory deadline is shorter).</p> <p>Based on information available as of 10 February 2025 in relation to Secondary transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% (1,177) of Year 6 children with an EHCP issued before 27 September 2024 have received draft offers with 130 consultations on-going.</li> <li>For Year 6 children with EHCPs issued post 27 September 2024, 56% (54) children have received draft offers with 42 consultations ongoing. This figure is likely to increase as children with newly issues EHCPs are included in this cohort.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>G</b></p>	
	<p>Update 2 (July)</p>	
	<p><b>RAG</b></p>	
	<p>Update 3 (December )</p>	
	<p><b>RAG</b></p>	



## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement  
Condition

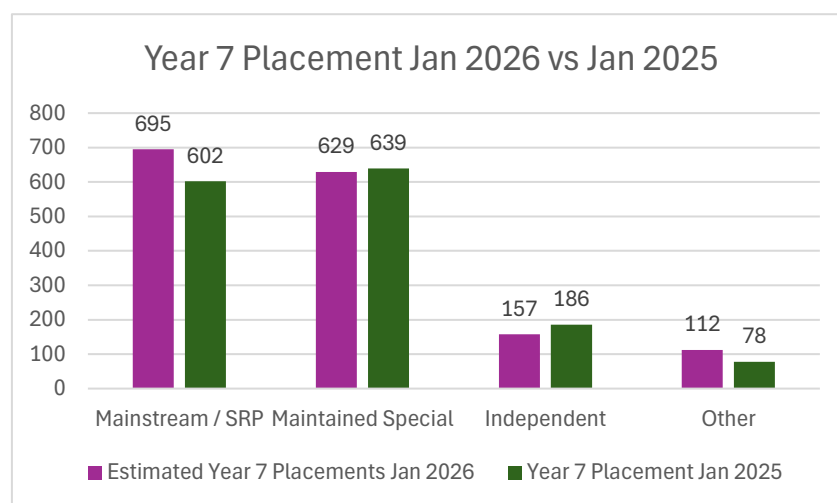
Assurance  
Level

Progress Update from this Quarter

*Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts*

- Of the total cohort, 88% (1,229) children have received draft offers.
- In terms of placements, 51% have placements in mainstream or Specialist Resource Provision (SRPs) settings, 47% in specialist settings (43% in state-funded and 4% in independent specialist settings) and 2% will be in other arrangements.

A comparison of estimated Year 7 placements in January 2026 versus January 2025 (below) is showing that more children are being placed in mainstream/SRPs through this years phased transfer process than in the previous year (2024) with an extra 4% of the total year 7 cohort expected to be placed in mainstream/SRPs.



In addition, overall the projected number of Year 7 pupils with an EHCP in January 2026 is also in keeping with Safety Valve forecasts. The number attending an independent schools is expected to be higher with less maintained special school places available (due to delays in the opening of new special schools). We also continue to see a spike in the number of children with “other” arrangements. The financial impact of this still to be fully assessed, as costs of placements are still be finalised.

For Primary Transfer (children entering year R) as of 28 March 2025 35% have placements in mainstream or Specialist Resource Provision (SRPs) and 65% in state-funded specialist settings. Based on ongoing assessment and additional assessment expected between April and August 2025, we are expect to exceed our original Safety Valve forecast for this age group by around 40%.

Kent has seen a spike on EHCP applications for early years children since COVID, like much of the country. The original Safety Valve assumed that as this cohort of children moved into

SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE		
Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>the education system, numbers would return more towards pre-COVID levels, alongside the benefits of the wider early years review having an impact. This has not happened and the impact of the Early Years review is not expected until September 2026 onward.</p> <p>The process to support Phased Transfer into Post-16 settings runs two months behind other phases and more information will be available within the next report.</p>
<p><b>Condition 7:</b> 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.</p>	Update 1 (April)	<p>There are 863 children recorded on Synergy as having no current placement as of January 2025 (with placement recorded as out of school, unknown or no current placement). This is 118 more children and young people compared to January 2024, although data shows a steady decline over the past months since a peak of 1,250 in August 2024.</p> <p>Improved data quality within SEN systems is providing increased clarity into the scale of this issue and improved identification of children and young people in this cohort is one reason why numbers appear to have increased.</p> <p>Numbers are decreasing as caseworkers are working to place children and young people with tuition providers and to secure appropriate school or Post-16 placements. Monitoring to understand numbers within the different subgroups (i.e. unknown and those out of school or without a placement) will enable further visibility on this issue and ability to track progress towards supporting children and young people.</p> <p>As noted in the previous (November 2024) report recommendations in relation to the special school review were presented to Children Young People and Education Cabinet Committee in November 2024. As noted above (Barriers to Successful Implementation section), the decision was then called in by Scrutiny Committee for further discussion, but subsequent to this discussion, was agreed.</p> <p>The need to work within existing resources mean that changes will be sequenced and Assistant Directors of Education (ADEs) are working with individual special schools, undertaking feasibility studies. This school by school preparatory work is crucial in ensuring that any proposed changes are both practically and financially viable. Assessing each school individually will provide a clearer understanding of their specific needs and challenges.</p> <p>Our new special school (NORE academy) opened in January 2025 following a delay with a late change in the provider trust. 48 places are due to filled before the end of the Summer 2025, with a further 12 from September 2025. The co-location of Nore</p>
	A	
	Update 2 (July)	
	RAG	
	Update 3 (December)	
	RAG	

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>with the new Alternative Provision (AP) is being monitored carefully by the Council to ensure the numbers attending the AP reduce in line with the agreement, allowing planned expansion of Nore.</p> <p>The Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) review is now entering the next phase in line with all other planned changes. ADEs have assessed where gaps in SRP provision has resulted in children being placed in independent and non-maintained special school settings due to lack of pathways and are working on a countywide implementation plan which will prioritise five districts to ensure that SRP provision is available locally and there are clear pathways from primary to secondary.</p> <p>Local Area Provision meetings have taken place and are being scheduled throughout the remainder of the year. These meetings bring together mainstream, mainstream with SRP, state-funded special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to develop innovative ways to maximise resources and share strategies to ensure suitable education and environments are provided across the continuum of provision.</p> <p>This has included identification of areas for either the expansion or creation of new SRPs (three of which have been brought forward to September 2025).</p> <p>The recent announcement of the new High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) for 2025-2026 is intended to be used to support the further expansion of SRPs and support the accessibility strategy (and wider inclusion) in mainstream schools.</p>
Condition 8: Develop a school/related approach to commissioning of SEN support services (Locality Based Resources), to better respond to the needs of children and young people with SEND	Update 1 (April)	<p>A process to allocate independent Chairs to each of the 53 Communities of Schools (CoS) being implemented as part of the Locality Based Resources model has been completed and face to face meetings have taken place to review guidance, establish ways of working and share information financial information, including an estimated budget for local decision making.</p> <p>All members of CoS will begin meeting from April 2025 for induction sessions and regular stakeholder meetings will continue supporting a phased approach to implementing change across the whole system between April 2025 and September 2026.</p> <p>Meetings with representatives from key inclusion focused services have been held. The focus is on clearly defining the offer of support from each service to provide clarity to CoS around the support available to them and how this is accessed. Ongoing meetings of this group will ensure that increased</p>
	<b>G</b>	
	Update 2 (July)	
	<b>RAG</b>	
	Update 3 (December )	
	<b>RAG</b>	

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>alignment of support, removing duplication, ensuring closer collaboration and information sharing between relevant services.</p> <p>A Key Decision taken by Cabinet Member for Education and Skills in February 2025 has enabled the implementation of a revised model for SEN Funding for state-funded schools. This enables progress on two key approaches:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The roll out of the CoS budgets for children on SEN Support and those with an EHCP with lower level support requirements.</li> <li>2. The roll out of a revised model of funding allocation to distribute high needs funding for children with ECHP with more complex support.</li> </ol> <p>The revised model will align funding allocations for individual (or groups of) children with SEN more closely to the level of adaptation to the curriculum required.</p> <p>Funding allocations will be agreed either by the Local Authority using a tariff, graduated according to level of adaption required (using funding descriptors informed by the locally developed Continuum of Need and Provision document), or by schools through the CoS for mainstream children on SEN Support or with lower-level support needs.</p> <p>Changes to the funding model are being phased in from April 2025 and aim to redistribute funding to schools more equitably based on the level of adaption required to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN. The model will allow for curriculum and provision creativity to meet needs and enable closer monitoring by the Council around the high needs budget available to support SEN in state-funded schools.</p> <p>Work to more fully define the Continuum of Need and Provision and funding descriptors will be defined, tested and finalised over the coming months in preparation for setting specific allocations against the funding descriptors.</p> <p>Key dates include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Continuum of Need and Provision will be published in May 2025.</li> <li>• Community of Schools budget introduced from September 2025.</li> <li>• Revised model of funding allocation introduced from September 2026.</li> </ul>
Condition 9:	Update 1 (April)	An analysis of Joint Funded Placement applications in 2023-2024 indicated that 39.1% of joint funding applications were

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
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.	<b>A</b>	successful and the average reclaim was £72,266 per year.
	Update 2 (July)	Based on this a number of targets were set regarding claiming money back from the NHS for placements that are joint funded by the NHS and KCC. This includes a target for between 11 – 13 new applications to be made each month with an target of reclaiming £342,397 - £355,730 from the NHS each month.
	<b>RAG</b>	
	Update 3 (December )	
	<b>RAG</b>	Data indicates that over the past ten months an average of 9.7 joint funding applications have been submitted to the NHS per month. With an average monthly reclaim total of £282,739. Performance in this area is below target levels but consistent and steady. As of January 2025, a total of £2,827,701 had been reclaimed for the 2024-2025 financial year. This is 80% of the £3.56m required to meet set targets and compares to £3.01m reclaimed for open cases by the end of the financial year over the same time period in 2023-2024. In December 2024, the cumulative reclaim was at 62% so progress is being made.
		However, it is currently unclear the degree to which this reclaim benefits the High Needs Block in comparison to budgets within other children's services. This clarification is being sought and an update will be provided in the next report.
		There have been a significant number of new agreements put in place during January 2025 and over 50 application are still awaiting a decision from the NHS.
		Significant work has been undertaken during this quarter to extend existing contracts for commissioned therapy services, and understand the interplay between the NHS and KCC funding in this arena.
		The implementation of the Balanced System® model for Speech, Language and Communication Needs continues to progress and is being rolled out across the county with the exception of Swale whose therapy provider has not engaged in the process.
		This quarter, three schools have completed their Balanced System® Accreditation, two of which are pursuing Centre of Excellence status and mentor support has been put in place for a new cohort of 12 schools.
		Given the complexity of the different arrangements in relation to therapy provision, a group is being established to more fully map these agreements, identifying gaps and duplications that can be addressed.
		Recent government announcements regarding NHSE and 50% reduction to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) budgets may

SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE		
Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		impact on the delivery of this condition.

RAG	Definition
	Savings/cost avoidance and/or workstream(s) complete
	Savings/cost avoidance and/or workstream(s) remains on target
	Savings/cost avoidance and/or workstream(s) are currently off target, with plans to mitigate
	Savings/cost avoidance and/or workstream(s) are off target



## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME RISK REGISTER

Risk	Assurance Level	Mitigation	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
Risk 1: Inability of the Council to meet the financial targets agreed within the Safety Valve Agreement, due to external factors outside the control of the Local Authority.	Update 1 (April)	<p>Elements of the risk are outside the control of the Council and dependent on external factors. For example:</p> <p>Delays to building of new special schools.</p> <p>DfE and central government upholding tribunal appeals regarding Local Authority decisions.</p> <p>Other Local Authorities no longer accept or continue to fund their local after children placed in Kent.</p> <p>School Budget funding for mainstream schools was lower than inflation and increased efficiencies expected from schools to fund teachers pay increases from September 25</p>	Delays to the building of two new special schools which would have increased the overall number of state funded special school places available, and reduced the number of children and young people being educated in private independent schools.
	<b>R</b>		
	Update 2 (July)		
	<b>RAG</b>		
	Update 3 (December)		
	<b>RAG</b>		<p>If they had opened this year as expected, a saving of £1.9m would have been achieved. The total lost saving from the delays between 2024-2025 and 2027-2028 is approximately £23m in total. This is adding to the deficit and accounts for the continuing forecast of £20 - £30m remaining accumulated deficit at the end of March 2028.</p>
			<p>Increased robustness in decision making is not always upheld when challenged at tribunal. This can undermine the efforts of the Local Authority to successfully implement the changes needed to achieve Safety Valve objectives. In this area, KCC has placed renewed focus on statutory mediation processes and has tripled its capacity to participate in mediation sessions. Improved processes and evidence gathering will seek to improve KCC ability to defend decisions at tribunal.</p>
			<p>We are seeing an increase in other local authorities refusing to fund their looked after children who have been placed in Kent. A meeting with DfE took place earlier in the year to discuss possible next steps.</p>
			<p>Raise concerns with DfE.</p> <p>KCC currently commission a “schools in deficit” team to support maintained schools.</p> <p>Schools Funding Forum have agreed to continue to fund full access to support services for primary schools (our most vulnerable group of schools).</p> <p>Access School Resource Management Advisor (SMRA) service where applicable.</p>

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME RISK REGISTER

Risk	Assurance Level	Mitigation	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
			Review position following submission of three-year financial plans for maintained schools (due 31 May 2025)
Risk 2: Inability of the Council to meet the financial targets agreed within the Safety Valve Agreement, due to increased demand for services, alongside increased inflation, national living wages, teachers pay and changes to VAT.	Update 1 (April)	Increasing demand for support will be addressed through system recalibration and maintenance of robust decision making.  Implementation of robust processes for fee increase requests.	<p>As noted previously, the demand for support for children in early years stages of education have increased. This is a national trend and overall the number of requests for EHC assessment for children under 5 in Kent has reduced. Work with SEND specialists accessed through the Safety Valve will seek to further understand and address this issue.</p> <p>Grant funding is not adjusted to reflect inflation forecasts meaning that overall the funding available to meet increased costs is increasingly insufficient to do so.</p> <p>This is impacting on the financial stability of state-funded special schools and creating anxiety within the state-funded sector and the number and percentage fee increases being submitted by independent schools and tuition providers.</p> <p>Robust processes are being implemented to review fee increases submitted. Fee negotiations for non-maintained independent schools fee increase requests for 2024-2025 avoided an additional £1m spend in this area.</p>
	A		
	Update 2 (July)		
	RAG		
	Update 3 (December)		
Risk 3: Lack of stakeholder confidence and engagement in changes being implemented.	RAG	Increased regular and ongoing stakeholder engagement, alongside clear and transparent information sharing.	<p>Poor data quality on Synergy remains a concern. Accurate data not only underpins our ability to understand current performance and predict future trends, but also underpins our ability to accurately share data with stakeholders as part of open and transparent communication process. Work continues to address this issue.</p> <p>Publication of Safety Valve pages on the Council website to increase understanding to the wider public.</p> <p>Risks referenced within the previous report in relation to changes to the Chair and representatives of the Schools Funding Forum have been removed following a successful</p>
	Update 1 (April)		
	A		
	Update 2 (July)		
	RAG		
	Update 3 (December)		
	RAG		



## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME RISK REGISTER

Risk	Assurance Level	Mitigation	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
			<p>transfer to revised membership.</p> <p>Further examples of stakeholder engagement are provided in Programme Headlines section.</p>