

Initiative	Safety Valve Case Studies:
Kirklees - Big plan	<p>Building inclusive capacity in mainstream schools in Kirklees</p> <p>A key feature of Kirklees strategic “big plan” for SEND – as a response to the local area SEND inspection in 2022 and the strategy for delivering on their Safety Valve agreement – has been building capacity for inclusion in mainstream schools. Through co-productive work with young people and families, an implementation plan based on ambitions to be inclusive was developed with the aim that ‘expertise and capacity is embedded in our mainstream settings to support early identification and assessment of need.’</p> <p>One element of this approach has been the development of Reception Transition Funding, which has been designed to provide additional funding for children who need some additional help with making the transition from early years settings to school in Reception. The aim is to provide schools with some additional funding to help the child to settle, assess their needs in a school setting, and continue the support provided in the child’s previous setting. In some cases, the child may go on to receive an EHCP, but in other cases Reception Transition Funding has enabled the school to put in place support without needing to apply for a statutory assessment. School leaders reported that the Reception Transition Funding was ‘absolutely brilliant’. One school leader said that Reception Transition Funding had been used to support 4 children, of which only 1 went on to need an EHCP. Without Reception Transition Funding, the school leader said that they would have sought an EHCP for all 4. PCAN (which stands for Parents of Children with Additional Needs and holds the role of the local PCF in Kirklees) also spoke positively about the approach.</p> <p>Further elements of the approach to building inclusive capacity in Kirklees have been to co-develop a “cluster model” bringing school SEN coordinators (SENCOs) and wider services together to share practice and use resources to provide support before an EHCP is needed, in parallel with the commissioning of new additional resourced provision in mainstream education. PCAN members have been involved in codeveloping these initiatives. They reflected that the aims of providing more support in school and better options for local provision were commendable. Work is ongoing to support the clusters and new resourced provision to get up-and-running and to function effectively as part of a broader offer of support and provision in the local area.</p> <p>Further details for Kirklees “big plan” for SEND can be found here SEND - The Big Plan! How we plan for SEND Kirklees SEND Local Offer</p>
Croydon’s Early intervention Model	<p>Approaches to early intervention in Croydon.</p> <p>A key feature of Croydon’s SEND strategy is its Early Intervention Model. Originally piloted in September 2020, before being rolled out across the borough, this approach allows SENCOs to bring cases to local networks of SENCOs for advice and support. The local networks are chaired by a dedicated Area SEND Lead and a headteacher. The networks provide SENCOs with access to support from a range of professionals, including educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, the Virtual School, children’s social care, and inclusion support services. Schools may receive advice or direct financial support from the Early Intervention Model.</p>

Since September 2020, it is estimated that the Early Intervention Model has provided support to more than 3,300 pupils – advice on practice and additional expertise to 2,300 pupils, and direct resources to 1,000. The system leaders to whom we spoke described 3 main benefits.

First, the Early Intervention Model provides an opportunity for early identification and support for children that does not depend on them having an EHCP. Some children who are supported through the Early Intervention Model will go on to get an EHCP (and where they do, practitioners consider that the evidence is stronger as a result of having been discussed through the Early Intervention Model), but others can get support that means that their needs can be met without needing an EHCP. As leaders from Croydon Active Voices (the local PCF) put it, ‘we were sceptical at first, but we have been won over by the team ... from what we hear, it is making a difference.’ As one school leader put it, ‘It is a good idea to put kids on a path to being successful without putting them into the SEND statutory system if you can help it.’

Second, Croydon’s Early Intervention Model promotes a culture of inclusion, ownership and collaboration among school leaders – school leaders to whom we spoke described the Early Intervention Model as ‘revolutionary’ in the way it has put money and expertise into schools and fostered a more consistent approach to inclusion. They recognised that the aim was not to stop requests for EHCNAs, but instead to **stop inappropriate requests for support where children’s needs could be met through strengthening whole-school practice.**

Third, the Early Intervention Model means that there are skilled practitioners who can go into schools and work with them in a way that is not dependent on statutory assessments – it provides dedicated capacity to support schools with early identification and support. As one school leader put it, ‘The [Early Intervention Model] staff are excellent.’

Hammersmith and Fulham - Early identification and early intervention

Strengthening early identification and intervention to improve outcomes and reduce escalation IN Hammersmith and Fulham

A key pillar of the SEND transformation programme in Hammersmith and Fulham was to **focus attention on early identification and early intervention**, which became a core element of their Safety Valve agreement.

One aspect of this has been the recruitment by the LA of a **Local Area SENCO who has worked with individual school SENCOs to support them in identifying children’s needs and navigating the range of support on offer** in the context of Hammersmith and Fulham’s revised guidance on ordinarily available provision. **This sets out very clearly what should be on offer for all children and young people with SEND.** Schools have found the clarity offered by this guidance very helpful. Hammersmith and Fulham have also introduced supervision for SENCOs overseen by educational psychologists, which is an opportunity both to reflect on their practice and discuss how best to provide support for individual children and young people.

The “Ask SAL” (SEND Advice Line) for settings has proved both popular and beneficial. It enables them to access swift and practical support on key issues that arise, through a ‘team around’ approach, including input from specialist teachers (Inspire), educational psychologists and occupational therapists.

	<p>The Inspire Specialist Teacher team has had a specific focus on providing earlier intervention, before needs become acute or embedded. The service offers training, advice, scaffolding practice in the classroom and direct support for individual children and young people across speech and language challenges and sensory needs, and support for children with autism. For example, the Joint Communication Team provides a new speech and language offer for children on SEND support, which has been instrumental in meeting needs earlier. This has meant that some of the children supported have not required specialist support, because they are progressing well in their learning</p>
<p>Kent - Communities of schools</p>	<p>Creating cooperative systems through school collaboration, shared resources, and peer support in Kent</p> <p>Kent has been on a multi-year journey to transform its approach to supporting children and young people with SEND, having received 2 critical SEND inspections in 2019 and 2022 and joining the Safety Valve programme in 2022.</p> <p>One of the most exciting elements of Kent’s transformation of its services for children and young people with SEND is the new Communities of Schools, which are being launched in the summer term of 2025 and will be fully operational from September 2025. Around 80% of schools in Kent are engaging with the initiative.</p> <p>The vision brings together all of Kent’s 600 mainstream schools in communities based on the footprint of the primary care networks. The geographical arrangements will allow for better engagement with local health services, including GPs. In total there will be 53 school communities incorporating primary schools and secondary schools. Each grouping will have delegated responsibility for a sum of money from the HNB and will appoint a committee to decide how best to spend the money.</p> <p>Once the communities are operational, it is intended that they will provide an effective means of peer support and peer challenge, to best meet the needs of the children and young people in that community, moving from a competitive to a cooperative environment. It will allow for more effective and efficient sharing of specialist resources, for example sharing highly skilled staff or specific resources or physical spaces. It will enable intervention to support cohorts of children within a school or locality rather than piecemeal support for individual children. The funding model is designed to strip out bureaucracy, enabling schools to access funding more swiftly to put support in place.</p> <p>Looking forward, there is confidence that this initiative will create a more equitable, stable, cooperative and creative basis for meeting the needs of children within a locality, provide the opportunity for deeper peer-to-peer learning, and facilitate the leveraging in of support and resources beyond education</p>
<p>Barnsley - Building capacity for inclusion</p>	<p>Building capacity for inclusion in Barnsley</p> <p>Barnsley’s SEND strategy includes details of how the local SEND system is responding to the 2021 local area SEND inspection and fulfilling its Safety Valve agreement. Central aspects of the strategy include building capacity for inclusion in mainstream schools and creating opportunities for Barnsley’s young people to access education closer to home in their local communities.</p>

	<p>Barnsley has invested in creating a new SEND Improvement Team, which includes dedicated specialists in social, emotional and mental health. The Team work with schools to share expertise, advice and strategies, and provide support for individual children. The school, health service and LA leaders to whom we spoke were positive about the SEND Improvement Team, which they considered to be an important addition to local SEND services that provide useful support in a sustainable manner. Leaders consider that the SEND Improvement Team has helped to avoid exclusions and keep young people in education. School leaders saw this as part of the wider work of education leaders in creating the Barnsley Alliance. This is a focal point for collective system leadership and aims to make Barnsley a place of possibility for its young people. The SEND Improvement Team, alongside SENDIASS and the SEND statutory team, also run drop-in sessions for parents in schools, to provide advice and be able to use families' lived experience when working with school staff. The parents and carers to whom we spoke were positive about the value of these drop-in sessions.</p> <p>Barnsley Council has also taken a proactive and highly personalised approach to working with families of children educated outside the borough as they approach key transition points. The Council has sought to build relationships and, by developing a broader range of local provision, to offer children and families options that allow them to continue their education within their local communities. To date, 14 school-age children who were previously educated outside the borough have been able to access an education placement to continue their education within Barnsley at a key stage transfer.</p>
<p>Salford- Investing in SEND leadership</p>	<p>Investing in SEND leadership in Salford</p> <p>Safety Valve has allowed Salford Council to make an additional investment in building long-term capacity across the SEND system to support professionals working with children and young people with SEND. The Council matched the transformation funding available through Safety Valve and created a new team of SEND Leaders, who will work across all mainstream and specialist education settings, from early years to post-16 settings.</p> <p>The SEND Leaders sit within the School Improvement Service and, as such, can take a whole-school approach to support for SEND. They work alongside other professionals working with schools to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people. The support they provide includes general training and tailored support for professionals in their settings, giving them the advice, guidance, tools and strategies to deliver outstanding teaching and learning for their SEND cohort.</p> <p>SEND Leaders have developed Salford's online graduated approach and support settings in its use, evidencing and reviewing children's and young people's SEND support. They also provide advice and support offer to schools via an email and telephone advice line.</p> <p>The aim of the team is to improve the consistency and quality of teaching and support for children and young people with SEND, with a greater focus on the impact of the support available in settings. The improvement in the confidence of SENCOs as strategic leaders implementing Salford's graduated approach can be seen from SEND Leaders' notes from visits, while stronger practice in supporting children and young people with SEND features in several recent Ofsted inspection reports.</p>

<p>Darlington's Schools Forum funding sub group</p>	<p>Improving funding decisions and accountability through the schools forum in Darlington</p> <p>The schools forum high needs monitoring sub-group in Darlington</p> <p>Darlington's schools forum established a high needs monitoring sub-group in November 2023 to enable closer working with the local authority on the oversight of high needs spend in the borough. Establishing a separate sub-group allowed the schools forum to allocate dedicated capacity to monitoring the use of high needs funding and making recommendations to schools forum based on the wider priorities set out in Darlington's written statement of action and Safety Valve agreement.</p> <p>The sub-group meets half-termly and is chaired by the vice-chair of the schools forum, a local primary school headteacher. LA officers attend meetings as observers to provide professional technical support. As well as supporting the schools forum with decision-making around top-up rates, placements and block transfers, the sub-group examines the cost and outcomes of services commissioned through the HNB and directs reviews to ensure best value. Sub-group meetings include consideration of individual case studies of pupils' placements, support and outcomes, to assess how high-cost social care and INMSS placements can be avoided in future, for instance through earlier support.</p> <p>The sub-group has helped to establish a sense of joint stewardship of the HNB, which has promoted a greater understanding among settings of HNB budgeting and its associated trade-offs.</p>
<p>Surrey's Neuro pods</p>	<p>Building dedicated spaces for neurodiverse students to build confidence in local provision in Surrey</p> <p>Enhancing support for young people who need additional support at Brooklands College in Surrey</p> <p>A key part of Surrey's SEND strategy is developing a broader range of local provision for children and young people with SEND, including in post-16 education. An example of proactive collaboration to improve post-16 opportunities for young people is the development of new SEND-friendly provision at Brooklands College. In response to anticipated trends in future needs, Surrey County Council agreed to invest £7m capital funding in the development of a new SEND provision at Brooklands, which is due to open in 2027. In the meantime, £1m has been invested in creating a "Neuro Pod" at the heart of one of Brooklands' 2 campuses as a space dedicated to supporting neurodiverse students in their day-to-day lives at college.</p> <p>The initial idea was to develop a specific digitally based study programme, but college leaders discovered, having talked to their students, that what was needed was a broader hub of support for neurodiverse students studying a range of programmes. College leaders believed that they could support more students by offering both the digital study programme and what became the Neuro Pod. Located at the centre of one of the main campuses, the Neuro Pod is run by specially trained staff who can provide advice to students on matters ranging from their timetable and preparing for changes in staff, to broader help that they might need. The space is available for students – not just those who are neurodiverse, but anyone who feels they need a quiet space during the college day – to get advice, to work, or to relax between their studies.</p>

	<p>The first cohort that will have been through college with the Neuro Pod will graduate this summer – all of the current students who are directly supported by the Pod are on course to graduate. As they move onto the next stage of their lives, there will be opportunities to identify the impact of the Neuro Pod. In the meantime, Brooklands leaders have reflected that the college has become seen as a more desirable and welcoming place for students with additional needs and their families. As one Brooklands leader put it, ‘5 years ago we had families coming to us who did not want to, but now that has completely changed.’</p>
<p>York’s Travel coordination and training scheme.</p>	<p>Improving travel independence and reducing SEND transport costs through expanded training and coordination in York</p> <p>York's Safety Valve agreement included action to reduce the costs of SEND transport. Since joining the Safety Valve programme, York have grown their internal transport team, who lead and coordinate home-to-school travel. The independent travel training service for 16–19-year-olds has been expanded, with £120,000 secured from York’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for 2025/26. A travel buddy scheme has also been launched with York College, partly drawing on an additional £100k of BSIP funding.</p> <p>As of the first quarter of 2024-25, the DSG element of the transport savings set out in York’s Safety Valve agreement had been delivered. The education settings taking part in our fieldwork felt the strengthened travel training service had supported more young people with SEND to gain travel independence. They also felt some savings on home to-school travel had been achieved by reducing the number of pupils with SEND needing to be educated out of area. PCF leaders, however, described how some parents and carers were concerned about the potential implications for the services available to their young people</p>