

York Schools Forum**15th October 2025**

Report of Assistant Director, Education and Skills

Safety Valve Year 4, Quarter 2 monitoring report and post safety valve planning**Summary**

1.This paper provides the members of the School Forum with an update on the progress being made to deliver the Safety Valve High Needs recovery plan. The Year 4, Quarter 2 monitoring report was submitted to the Department for Education on 15th July 2025.

Progress on the Safety Valve Recovery Plan

3. York's Safety Valve agreement has entered its final year; financial year 2025-26. The emphasis of the work with all stakeholders this academic year is about post Safety Valve planning to ensure that progress made on the deficit reduction can be maintained.

4. Nationally, learning from the SEND change programme, Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value programmes is being used to inform the development of the Schools White paper, due to be published before the end of the autumn term.

5. In York, we have successfully delivered the terms of the Safety Valve agreement within the timescale determined by the Department for Education. This has meant that all Safety Valve payments have been paid on time following the submission of monitoring reports. This has meant that the city's historic deficit position on the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant has been addressed and brings the city in to an in-year balanced position to start the financial year 2026/27.

.6. The table below summarises the position at the start of the final year of the Safety Valve agreement:

Safety Valve Priority	Year 4, Quarter 2 update
Manage demand appropriately by supporting more children and young people in mainstream settings and appropriate and timely ceasing of Education, Health and Care plans.	<p>Numbers of EHCPs have continued to rise – however, overall percentage remains below national (4.6% York, 5.3% national). SEN Support is 11.6% in York as against 14.2% nationally.</p> <p>Total number of plans appropriately ceased in 2024/25 was 121 – this was an increase of 30 on 2023/24.</p>

	<p>The percentage of children with an EHCP in mainstream remains above national. This is being further supported in 2025/26 through the targeted use of SEND capital and the review and development of SEMH tier 1 support to reduce suspensions and keep permanent exclusions at current low levels</p>
<p>Reduce the costs of SEND transport and support independence by improving strategic and individual commissioning and contract management. This will include reductions in the costs of out of city placements, a review of banding and SEND transport.</p>	<p>This workstream is complete as the transport savings from the High Needs DSG have been achieved.</p>
<p>Support the inclusion of children and young people with SEND in mainstream settings to improve outcomes and reduce requests for specialist provision, including the development of pre-and post-diagnosis support pathways.</p>	<p>This workstream is complete as the transport savings from the High Needs DSG have been achieved.</p> <p>The extension of funding to support the York Independent Travel Training Service is allowing the team to work with more children and young people to help them to travel independently and reduce reliance on taxis.</p> <p>Applefields Special School has won the Modeshift national STARs Award for 2025. Applefields has embedded active travel into school life through the leadership of its Active Travel Ambassadors, who use data and research to shape campaigns and refine the School Travel Plan.</p>
<p>Create more enhanced resource provision in mainstream schools to support the transition of children with a primary need of autism and associated social, emotional and mental health needs to reduce out of city placements.</p>	<p>The delivery of actions in the SEND Hub implementation plan are all on track. A competition for children and young people to find a name for the has just concluded and the winning name has been chosen as SEND Central.</p> <p>The navigator posts hosted by the Parent Carer Forum have been recruited</p>

	<p>to and this has added essential capacity to the delivery of the implementation plan. The formal opening of the building took place on 20th September 2025.</p> <p>In June 2025 the area SEND partnership participated in the Regional Inclusion mini peer review programme. Findings from the review have been used to further develop the Inclusion and Belonging Strategy (the revised SEND and AP Strategy) which will be taken to the Council's Executive in October 2025.</p> <p>A review of the effectiveness of current and future ERP provision is taking place and will be completed by September 2025. This will inform the allocation of the additional SEND capital grant during 2025/26 to promote inclusive mainstream provision through supporting additional ERP/SEND unit provisions in mainstream.</p> <p>The Excel Multi-Academy Trust has registered the INSPIRE Centre as an independent special school for SEMH which has added additional specialist places in City. These places are more cost effective than out of city independent school places and provide a model of provision which is destinations led, with a specific focus on work experience and functional skills.</p> <p>The growth in SEMH as an area of primary need continues and this will be a specific focus on work to develop inclusive mainstream practice in 2025/26 through early identification and better targeting of evidence-informed interventions</p>
<p>Increase the number of young people with SEND in employment in the 19-25 age range by preparing post 16 and post 19 for adulthood, with a focus on routes to employment post 19.</p>	<p>A post 16 review is taking place during 2025-26 to identify gaps in the city provision map and to inform a post 16 and post 19 PfA commissioning plan.</p> <p>The work on supported internships continues to grow including a</p>

	commitment from the Council to participate in the programme. In 204-25 4 out of 5 interns at Aviva were successful in gaining permanent employment with the company.
--	--

Post Safety Valve Priorities and Planning

8. The impact of disapplication from the Schools Block to support Inclusive Mainstream Provision is the focus on the post Safety Valve planning. This work anticipates the focus on inclusive mainstream provision which has been central to the work being trialled through the SEND change programme and the focus on the new Ofsted inspection framework and the schools white paper.

9. There are examples regionally and nationally of work that is taking place to support inclusion in mainstream. This includes the development of an Inclusion Quality Mark and online self-evaluation tool in one local authority, the development of local area inclusion partnerships in Kirklees and Doncaster and SEMH in-reach support to support pupils in classrooms in a number of local authorities as part of tier 1 support.

10. In York we have existing good practice through the development of the learning support hub and our Fair Access protocols. However, we know that improving identification and intervention at SEN support is a priority to ensure that children and young people receive the right support, in the right place and at the right time. In 2019 we were supported by IMPOWER to review the pressure in our high needs block and the recommendations made at that time remain valid as we look at our post safety valve planning.

11. IMPOWER made the following recommendations:

- (a) Improve support for SEMH needs – trialling multi agency support for a targeted cohort
- (b) Strengthen SEN Support Plans – clarifying use, training and consolidating information
- (c) Change the Conversation – to embed strengths-based practice
- (d) Supported transitions – to manage peaks in need around change points e.g. targeting MSP / EHHCP reviews in year 5 (age 10) to manage expectations for secondary school.

12. These remain areas that we should focus on and while we have evidence of ways that we have been addressing these priorities there is more work that needs to be done based on what has happened over the last six years.

13. The work we have piloted through the team around the school model can be usefully focused on building a team around the cluster with a specific focus on SEMH needs. Children with SEMH needs are more likely to lose learning through absence, reduced timetables and suspensions. As a result of the broad profile of need that SEMH describes they cannot be seen as a homogeneous cohort and this makes the 'team around' approach a valuable one as it allows a nuanced multi-agency support plan to be developed.

14. In developing the rationale for the disapplication from the schools block, the reasoning for doing so is that this is the profile of need that is acknowledged to create the greatest concerns across all schools. Therefore, an investment from and into the school system is the reasoning behind the disapplication. This will create the revenue needed to fully

support schools to develop the tiered response the SEMH needs and will prove cost effective as the York school system becomes less reliant on external alternative provision. The development of neighbourhood clusters alongside developing additional enhanced resource provision with a specific focus on supporting transition for children and young people with SEMH needs would have a positive whole system impact and would support the city's focus on inclusion and belonging.

Contact Details Authors:	Chief Officers Responsible for the Report:			
Maxine Squire Assistant Director, Education and Skills Tel: 01904 553007 email: maxine.squire@york.gov.uk	Martin Kelly Corporate Director of Children's Services and Education			
	Report Approved		Date	
For further information please contact the author of the report				