



Good Outcomes Positive Futures

Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

Annual Report

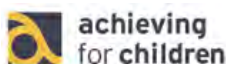
Academic Year 2024-2025

Joint consortium arrangement between:

Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Reading Borough Council
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Slough Borough Council
West Berkshire Council
Wokingham Borough Council

Host Authority:

*Hosted by Achieving for
Children on behalf of the
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead*



Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service is hosted by Achieving for Children on behalf of RBWM as part of the Berkshire Joint Agreement between RBWM, Slough, Bracknell Forest, Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire.

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Executive Summary

- The overall budget is in line with the agreed joint arrangements with the main costs continuing to be allocated to staffing.
- 100% of all of the core visits per Local Authority have been delivered
- The number of new referrals to the Service has significantly increased in 2024/25 leading to a small rise in the number of overall CYP supported by the Service
- The number of pupils with additional needs supported by the Service has increased in mainstream settings.
- The number of pupils with an EHCP for sensory impairment continues to increase with 38% of CYP who are vision impaired / MSI and 24% of CYP who are deaf now having an EHCP.
- 99% of settings strongly agree or agree that the training they have received from the Service has improved their knowledge and skills of the impact of a SI on learning and access.
- 99% of participants at training events in settings strongly agree /agree that they now know how to support a young person with SI in their setting as a result of the training.
- Pupils overall are making good progress and achieve strong outcomes.
- Parental feedback on service delivery is strong with areas for development identified which are addressed through Service meetings, team training and the Service Development Plan.
- EYFS Outcomes for CYP supported by the service are below all children nationally although the gap is narrowing and are significantly above the figures for CYP with deafness reported by the National Deaf Children's Society DFE analysis.
- The percentage of CYP who are deaf or vision/ MSI achieving a Grade 5 or above at Key Stage 4 in English and Maths is above the national figures for all children.
- As a result of stakeholder feedback the Service has moved forward with providing centrally employed specialist Teaching Assistants in schools to work with those pupils who are blind . The Service has also employed a Deaf Instructor supporting sign language skills within the team and working individually with families and young people.
- The Service is fully staffed with no vacancies. All staff have completed the mandatory qualification with one Teacher of the Deaf currently on the course.
- A wide range of training opportunities continues to be provided for professionals, families, and pupils and stakeholder feedback demonstrates impact of service delivery
- The number of young people going on to further or higher education and apprenticeships continues to be a strength.
- More information about the Service can be found on the BSCS website [Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service Website](#)

1. Introduction

The Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service (BSCS) delivers specialist teaching and advisory support for children and young people who have a sensory impairment (SI) across the six Berkshire Local Authorities. The Joint Arrangements ensure that the special educational needs of children and young people (CYP) are met in a coordinated and consistent way. The arrangement has been in place since 1998.

The BSCS model of service delivery has been held up as an example of good practice by national voluntary agencies working in the field of SI and by the DFE as a positive delivery model to meet the needs of a low incidence group. Economies of scale and the recruitment and retention of a specialist workforce enables the Service to have a transparent but flexible approach to service delivery. Our pupils are able to remain part of their local communities with the right level of support as a result of early intervention, direct teaching and advice and working in partnership with all stakeholders. The Service works with LAs and families to identify other types of provision as required to find the right provision which meets the individual needs of pupils while providing best value.

In 2024, we refreshed our Service Development Plan to ensure it reflects the evolving needs of our children and young people, their families and the educational settings we support, building on the strong foundations we've already established. This has led to another busy year, not only in delivering our core services, but also in driving forward new initiatives.

The annual impact report for 2024/25 gives stakeholders an overview of the work of the Service in the last academic year. It is made available on our website for parents and schools to access. More detail is available on request from the Service. Alongside the teaching and advisory work the Service continues to offer a range of training opportunities for all stakeholders as well as events for young people. The termly newsletter highlights the voice of the young people the Service supports and showcases their achievements as well as providing an insight into some of the work of the Service.

In the report, the term deafness is primarily used rather than hearing impairment (HI) to include all deaf CYP regardless of the level of their hearing loss in line with the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) and the British Association of Teachers Deaf CYP (BATOD). Sensory Impairment (SI) refers to both CYP who are either deaf, vision or multisensory impaired.

I would like to thank all the BSCS staff for their outstanding commitment to the children and young people, their families and to the schools over the last academic year. I would also like to thank our Local Authority partners and other stakeholders for their continued support. Our success continues to be based on the quality of the joint working with partners, families, the commitment and expertise of the staff and our positive relationships with families, schools, and colleges. The Service remains committed to achieving 'Good Outcomes, Positive Futures' for all of our SI pupils through the development of the core offer through the joint arrangements.

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2. Service Delivery

BSCS offers two types of specialist programmes which deliver different levels of support from our Qualified Teachers of the Deaf, Vision and Multi-Sensory Impaired alongside our Qualified Specialist Habilitation officers and Qualified Educational Specialist Teaching Assistants (QESTAs). The number of visits for each CYP is determined using the NATSIP Eligibility Criteria in line with the Service support programmes. The matrix score determines whether the CYP receives a teaching or an advisory level of support. A matrix score for each pupil is available on the caseloads and is shared with the Local Authorities and in reports for schools and families. Both delivery programmes use the BSCS Quality First Teaching documents which outline for schools their role in meeting the needs of SI learners and how this dovetails with the role of the specialist teacher. The Service continues to focus on building the capacity of schools, settings and parents through coaching, training, and advice alongside direct teaching. Every school and setting is offered bespoke BSCS training as part of the core provision. Additional pan-Berkshire training for SENCOs, Local Authority SEN case officers, health professionals, social care and other professionals and stakeholders is also delivered across the year.

BSCS has continued to focus on improving pupil outcomes through the tracking of progress as part of pupil review meetings and programme planning which sets out the delivery model for each CYP. Objectives and outcomes are regularly reviewed and shared with families and settings so that next steps can be set, and achievements celebrated.

2.1 Sensory Consortium Service Caseloads Overview of Data

Table 1 outlines the numbers of CYP who are supported as part of the core BSCS provision and compares this to those who are educated in resource bases or specialist schools for D/HL. The figures in tables 1 & 2 for the BSCS mainstream support do not include CYP in generic special schools and those in independent schools. The latter are supported through commissioning of support through additional Inclusion Premium contracts. The number of visits commissioned to support those in independent schools, non maintained provision is given in Table 12. The number of pupils in generic Special Schools is in Table 9.

The core caseload figures are a snapshot at the end of the academic year as pupils are continually added to the caseload as a new referral or as no further action if they leave or no further intervention is required.

The overall number of CYP in education with SI from September 2024 to July 2025 has increased with 92% of all CYP identified with SI supported by BSCS. The BSCS figures do not include the additional pupils supported in generic special schools. The majority of pupils in specialist schools for SI are identified as having significant additional needs, particularly those with vision impairment (VI). The data highlights the number of young people who are included in their local school and reflects the Service's ability to meet the needs of pupils who have severe or profound sensory impairment who would otherwise be in resource or specialist settings.

Table 1: Berkshire pupils 2024 /25 who are Deaf (D/HL)

LA -	BSCS Support Mainstream and Preschool			Resource School within LAs			Special Schools for the Deaf		
	22-23 D/HL	23-24 D/HL	24 - 25 D/HL	22-23 D/HL	23-24 D/HL	24 - 25 D/HL	22-23 D/HL	23-24 D/HL	24- 25 D/H/L
Slough	134	115	135	9	12	13	3	2	3
RBWM	91	100	101	6	4	2	4	1	1
Bracknell	89	83	93	1	2	2	5	2	2
Wokingham	117	126	128	7	5	5	9	7	7
Reading	94	78	81	5	5	3	4	5	4
W Berks	114	105	106	10	10	10	7	8	9
Totals	639	607	644	38	38	35	32	25	26

In Berkshire 92% of all mainstream children and young people who are deaf are supported by the service. 4.8% attend a resourced provision in a mainstream primary or secondary setting with 3.7% attending a School for the Deaf.

Table 2: Pupils who are Vision Impaired (VI)

LA -	BSCS Support Mainstream and Preschool			Resource School within LAs			Specialist VI Schools		
	22-23 VI	23-24 VI	24-25 VI	22-23 VI	23-24 VI	24-25 VI	22-23 VI	23-24 VI	24-25 VI
Slough	71	70	71	0	0	0	4	3	3
RBWM	33	31	41	0	0	0	3	1	1
Bracknell	37	37	39	0	0	0	2	0	0
Wokingham	53	52	56	0	0	0	3	1	1
Reading	70	72	78	3	1	1	2	1	0
W Berks	63	60	61	0	0	0	2	0	1
TOTALS	327	322	346	3	1	1	16	6	5

In Berkshire 98% of all pupils with vision impairment or MSI are supported by BSCS in their local school with 1% educated in a specialist school setting for VI. Less than 1% attend resource provision.

The snapshot of the resource based pupil numbers and those in non-maintained and independent settings was taken in November 2024. The data is reliant on the information provided by the individual schools and the Local Authorities (LAs) at the beginning of the academic year.

Increases and decreases in hearing resourced provision and LA specialist placements continues to be influenced by the number of CYP with hearing loss who move into the county from outside Berkshire, those who require daily specialist support from a Qualified Teacher of the Deaf or the need for settings which can offer British Sign Language (BSL) support.

The Service, as part of the joint arrangements, holds a database for all the CYP with SI across Berkshire regardless of their setting and this enables national reporting, completion of freedom of information (FOI) requests on behalf of the LAs and provision of LA support at annual reviews and transition meetings.

In Table 3 we see that the majority of pupils who are deaf are supported at the primary phase with a drop at secondary. This may be a reflection of the impact of early intervention and the good use of technology which supports independence in learning. For CYP with VI at secondary there remains a higher degree of modification of materials which is dependent on ongoing support. All schools can re-refer pupils if there are any concerns about the young person's access to learning in the classroom or there is a significant change in their hearing or vision. Schools can also continue to access advice and information via the BSCS website.

Table 3: Overall BSCS caseload by phase

LA and age bands	Deafness				VI (plus MSI)			
	Pre-school	Prim	Sec	FE	Pre-school	Prim	Sec	FE
Slough	26	59	35	4	16	28(1)	26	0
RBWM	7	58	21	15	4(3)	10(1)	20	3
Bracknell	21	46	21	5	0	14	23	1(1)
Wokingham	18	64	35	5	13	26	16(1)	0
Reading	22	37	13	2	20	25	21	12
West Berks	29	46	24	7	13	22	22(1)	2
Totals	124	310	149	38	66(3)	125(2)	128(2)	18(1)

Table 4: Overall BSCS caseload by Degree of Vision Impairment

LA and year	Vision / Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI in brackets)							
	Mild		Moderate		Severe		Profound	
	23/24	24-25	23/24	24-25	23/24	24-25	23/24	24-25
Slough	28	29(1)	16	16	18	14	8	6
RBWM	15	15	10	15	4	5	2	3
Bracknell	21	21	8	11	6	3	2	1(1)
Wokingham	27(1)	28(1)	17	14	5	5	2	3
Reading	33(1)	30(1)	18	18(1)	15	17(2)	5	5
West Berks	30(1)	30	14(1)	16(1)	9	8	5	3
Totals	157		84		57		24	

Table 5: Overall BSCS caseload by Degree of Deafness

LA and year	Deafness <i>(Unilateral in brackets)</i>							
	Mild		Moderate		Severe		Profound	
	23/24	24-25	23/24	24-25	23/24	24-25	23/24	24-25
Slough	32(5)	36(2)	53(7)	50(12)	4(1)	6	12(1)	14(4)
RBWM	41(12)	37(10)	29(3)	29(5)	3(5)	3(1)	5(2)	8(5)
Bracknell	35(11)	34(12)	23(5)	26(7)	2(1)	2(4)	5(1)	4(1)
Wokingham	47(11)	43(9)	25(15)	30(13)	7(6)	4(4)	12(3)	10(5)
Reading	35(4)	35(4)	21(4)	20(3)	2(1)	2(2)	4(7)	3(5)
West Berks	44(13)	40(9)	30(4)	26(8)	1(2)	1(3)	8(3)	9(5)
Subtotal	234(56)	225(46)	181(38)	181(48)	19(16)	29(14)	46(17)	37(25)
Totals	290	271	219	229	35	43	63	62

The British Society of Audiologists descriptors are used to determine the level of hearing loss. This is a nationally agreed protocol for the recording of the degree of deafness. The Service continues to provide advice for CYP with a unilateral hearing loss in line with the research on the impact of a one sided hearing loss on educational outcomes. The Service does not support CYP with Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) as part of the core caseload. BSCS are able to offer schools advice on APD for which there is a charge. LAs can request advice and if directed BSCS can carry out a functional assessment at the direction of the LA. Details can be found on the BSCS website.

2.2 New Referrals

All new referrals come to the Service via Health for preschool children and for school age pupils directly from schools, colleges and in some cases from LAs when a pupil moves into the area. Referrals are made via the BSCS website for school and college young people. Health professionals are also encouraged to use the online referral system.

Table 6 reports the number of new referrals the service has received this academic year and how many CYP are taken onto caseload following assessment. The total number of referrals has increased significantly which has resulted in more young people being taken on to the caseloads which puts pressure on the core capacity.

Table 6: Number of new referrals

LA	Total Referrals					Total Referrals taken on to Caseload				
	20/21	21/22	22-23	23- 24	24 - 25	20/21	21/22	22/23	23- 24	24 - 25
Slough	38	44	32	25	50	36	37	30	24	49
RBWM	15	29	30	26	32	14	26	26	22	26
Bracknell	20	23	19	14	32	17	17	15	14	30
Wokingham	27	26	29	29	27	22	22	26	24	22
Reading	33	35	38	22	26	30	29	30	19	24
West Berks	38	27	35	33	33	32	10	26	25	28
TOTALS	171	184	183	149	200	151	141	153	128	187

2.3 Pupils with Education Health and Care Plans

The number of CYP with an EHCP on the mainstream BSCS caseloads has increased and now accounts for 38% of those with VI/MSI and 24% of those who are deaf. The data does not distinguish between primary and secondary needs. The figure also does not include those CYP with SI who are in a Berkshire generic special school or resource provision.

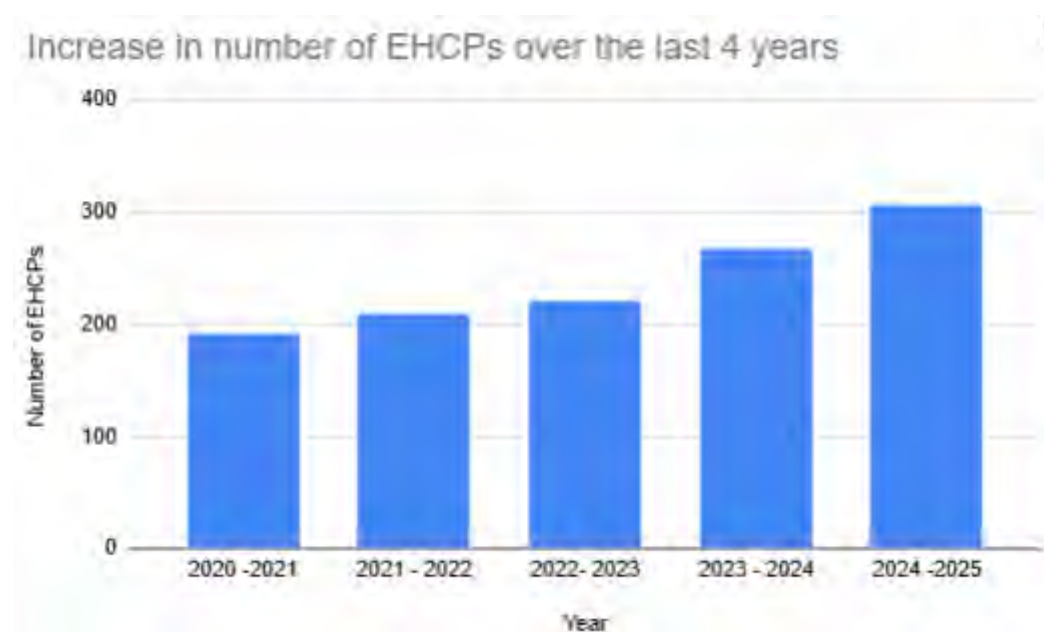
Table 7: Number of BSCS Core mainstream CYP with an EHCP 2024-25 by LA

Local Authority	D/HL 22-23	D/HL 23-24	D/HL 24-25	VI/MSI 22-23	VI/MSI 23-24	VI/MSI 24-25	Total 24-25
Bracknell LA	11	16	23	12	13	14	37
RBWM LA	16	27	27	11	9	13	40
Reading LA	15	18	19	20	29	38	57
Slough LA	33	37	43	22	21	25	68
West Berks LA	22	24	28	20	21	26	54
Wokingham LA	27	35	30	12	18	20	50
Total	124	157	170	97	111	136	306

Note the figures do not include those in special schools

Table 8: Number of BSCS Core CYP with an EHCP comparison by Academic Year

Year	D/HL	VI/MSI	Total
2020 -2021	106	85	191
2021 - 2022	122	87	209
2022- 2023	124	97	221
2023 - 2024	157	111	268
2024 -2025	170	136	306



2.4 Deaf CYP Modes of Communication

The number of CYP on the Service caseloads using British Sign Language is very low with the majority of young people, of all levels of deafness, primarily using speech or Sign Supported English (SSE) i.e. using a total communication approach.

In 2024/25 there were 11 CYP who used BSL or SSE as their primary mode of communication. In addition, 27 pupils used Makaton, the majority of whom had other additional needs. The Service has two members of staff who are deaf, one of whom is a BSL first language user. All Teachers of the Deaf hold at least a Level 1 BSL qualification with some staff holding Level 2 and 3.

In 2024/25 the Service employed a deaf instructor to work with families and young people whose first language is BSL or for those who are using sign language currently as their primary mode of communication. The deaf instructor also attends one of the preschool groups and works individually with young people on positive identity and wellbeing.

2.5 Special Schools

The Universal Offer for all special schools out of the core provision is 10 visits in total (6 VI/MSI and 4 TOD) and this is reviewed each year. The universal provision offers:

- Clinics for on-site review and maintenance of specialist equipment.
- Specialist advice for individual teachers and assistants.
- Discussion of information collated on individual children.
- Liaison with health colleagues, e.g., Audiology or Ophthalmology
- Training for staff
- Review of resources and information sharing
- Environmental audits

Additional visits are purchased via an Inclusion Premium (IP) contract for pupils. The LAs have agreed to use any additional core capacity within their LA to provide additional support to individual special schools for Berkshire pupils where there are sufficient visits in the core agreement for that LA. None of the seven schools has a qualified teacher for deafness or vision/ multisensory impairment within their own staffing and therefore a significant amount of support is provided by the Service into all of the schools.

The joint equipment budget provides specialist equipment to meet the needs of SI learners in special schools.

Table 9 provides a breakdown by Special school of the 191 CYP who are seen by the Service.

Table 9: Number of pupils in Berkshire Special Schools

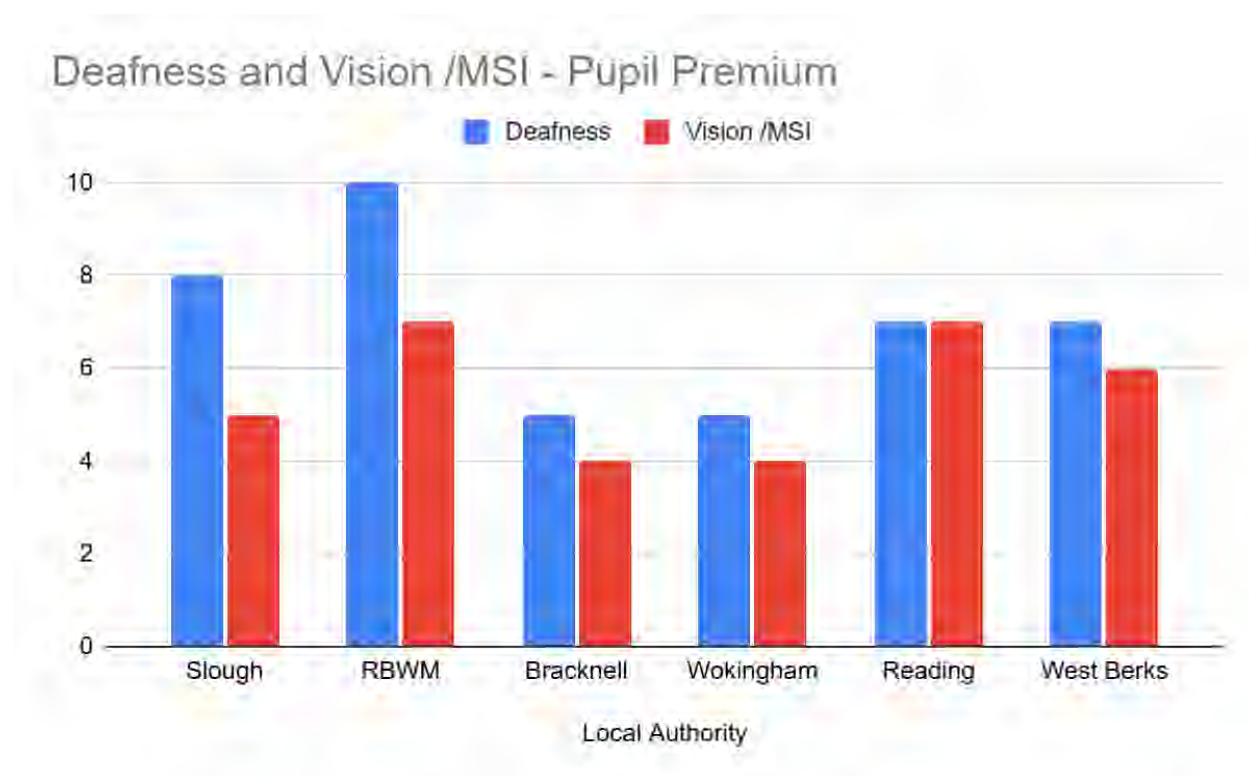
School	Deafness CYP					VI plus MSI CYP in brackets				
	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Addington	23	19	13	12	11	18 (10)	20 (10)	20(3)	19(4)	20(4)
Arbour Vale	14	8	9	12	11	29 (6)	22(3)	20 (3)	23(3)	21(3)
Avenue	7	7	4	7	10	45(2)	49(2)	17 (2)	15(2)	24(1)
Brookfields	16	9	9	10	10	14(5)	12(3)	12(3)	8(3)	7(1)
Castle	4	5	6	6	5	12(1)	13(4)	14 (4)	17(4)	17(5)
Kennel Lane	6	3	4	4	4	9(2)	9(2)	9(2)	11(1)	10(1)
Manor Green	5	2	5	7	7	33 (10)	26(8)	26(7)	30(6)	29(8)

School	Deafness CYP					VI plus MSI CYP in brackets				
	20/21 1	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Addington	23	19	13	12	11	18 (10)	20 (10)	20(3)	19(4)	20(4)
Arbour Vale	14	8	9	12	11	29 (6)	22(3)	20 (3)	23(3)	21(3)
Avenue	7	7	4	7	10	45(2)	49(2)	17 (2)	15(2)	24(1)
Total	75	53	50	58	58	160 (36)	151 (32)	118 (17)	123 (23)	128 (23)

2.7. Pupil Premium

The Service collects Pupil Premium (PP) data as part of the new referral process. Staff are asked routinely to discuss how the grant is used in the school and to work with the SENCO to target specific needs relating to the young person's SI. The figures do not include CYP in special schools. It is felt that the number identified as receiving PP is low and that there is under reporting.

Table 10: Number of BSCS Core CYP who receive Pupil Premium 24/25



2.62 Ethnicity

BSCS uses RBWM's categorisation of ethnicity to collect data on a child's ethnicity via the online referral form. The term Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) is currently used by the Service in line with AFC policy.

The largest group supported by BSCS is consistently White British with the largest BAME group of Pakistani heritage. The figures do not include pupils in special schools.

Table 11: Percentage of BSCS Core CYP recorded as BAME

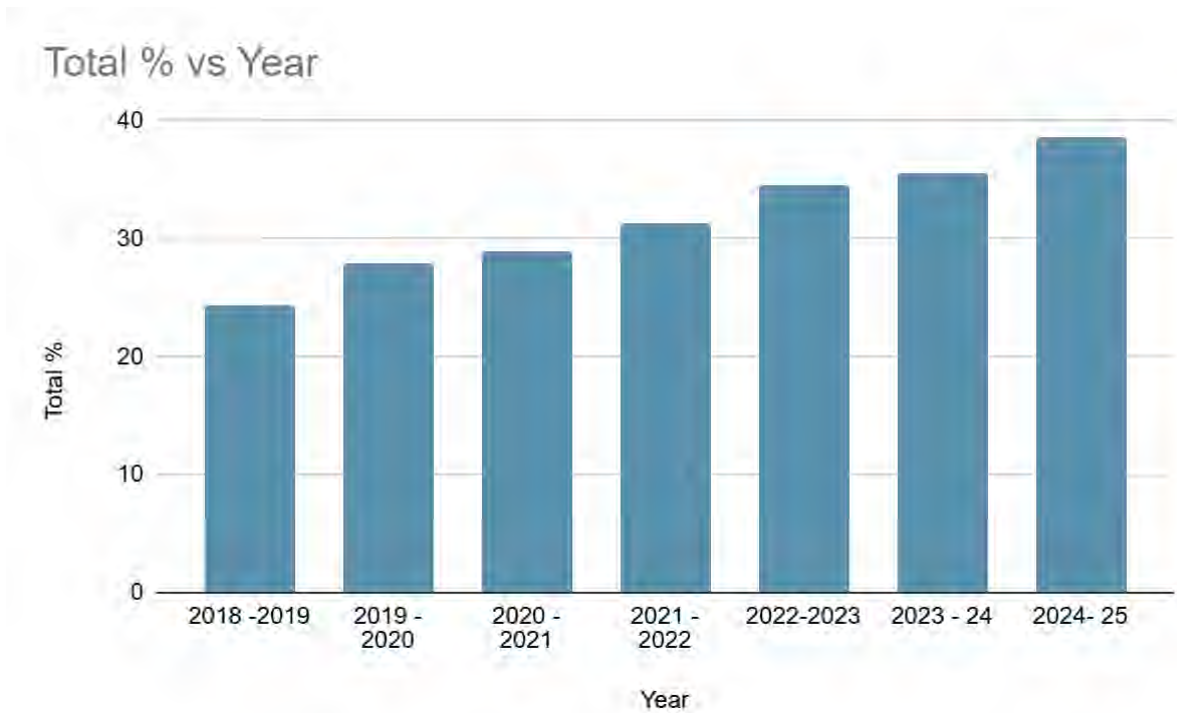


Table 11 highlights the year on year increase of BAME pupils on the BSCS core caseload. The Service has also had a significant increase in the number of young people who have moved to the UK who may have had limited support for their sensory impairment in the past if any. A number of these pupils have had no formal school education and are often using some kind of non formal sign or gestures to communicate. The Service has a specialist educational support assistant who works across both the deaf and VI teams alongside the teacher to work with families where English is not their first language.

2.8 Inclusion Premium

Under the BSCS Joint Arrangements each of the Local Authorities have an agreed number of core visits which determine the specialist support available for CYP with SI in each LA. The core provision aims to meet the needs of most pupils. However, within the contract, there is also provision to request additional funding (Inclusion Premium).

Inclusion Premium (IP) enables high need SI pupils who require a highly specialised teaching package for them to make progress and access learning to be educated in their local mainstream school. Many of these pupils would otherwise be in specialist resourced provision or a specialist school. It also manages the additional demand upon the core provision which may already be fully allocated and therefore enable the needs of all CYP with SI to be met. The Inclusion Premium contracts also enable generic special and non-maintained and independent schools to purchase visits over and above the core provision criteria. All visits to private /independent schools unless agreed with the LA are purchased.

Inclusion Premium contracts are set up on an annual basis although there is flexibility to meet the needs of pupils who move into the area or where needs have changed significantly. This allows LAs to have annual fluctuations in the overall provision from the Service. Where contracts are expected to be ongoing and long term and result in an excess of 10% of core funding, then LAs are asked to consider increasing their core provision.

The overall number of Inclusion Premium visits has remained similar to 2023/24.

Table 12: Inclusion Premium Visits

Financial Year	22/23			23/24			24/25		
Berkshire LAs	D/HL	VI	Total	D/HL	VI	Total	D/HL	VI	Total
Bracknell LA	0	91	91	49	15	64	58	42	100
RBWM LA	0	21	21	0	0	0	19	0	19
Reading LA	0	0	0	0	147	147	0	124	124
Slough LA	10	1857	1867	0	1978	1978	0	1811	1811
West Berks LA	0	154	154	0	103	103	0	120	120
Wokingham LA	16	471	487	0	510	510	0	510	510
Other AFC							0	26	26
Bucks LA	0	75	75	0	148	148	0	85	85
Oxford LA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hampshire LA	7	0	7	4	0	4	12	0	12
Colleges	235	348	583	241	483	724	236	509	745
Non maintained /Independent	33	147	180	34	141	175	44	131	175
Resource Bases	169	105	274	83	61	144	56	102	158
Generic Special Schools	247	688	935	199	812	1011	347	756	1103
Total	717	3957	4674	610	4,398	5,008	772	4216	4988

2.8 Resourced School Support

Across Berkshire there are three primary and two secondary resource provisions for CYP who are deaf and one VI provision. BSCS provides a range of support to the settings. The joint working enables sharing of expertise and specialist professional advice, the opportunity to ensure the smooth transition of pupils in and out of the provision and forward planning with the schools and the LA around predicted needs/ places.

In 24/25 support has included:

- Provision of all the QTVI teaching and Habilitation support at Highdown VI Resource
- Provision of all radio aids
- Attendance at Annual Reviews and advice on transition
- Technical updates on specialist equipment, Braille and network groups for TAs
- BSCS Educational Audiologist visits every term
- Resource base audits and LA review of provisions
- Comprehensive audit of provision and development planning for Westwood Farm resource provision in partnership with West Berkshire
- Additional mentorship for Teachers when they are appointed without the mandatory QTVI or QToD qualification at Langley Academy resource base. This is agreed as part of an additional charged service

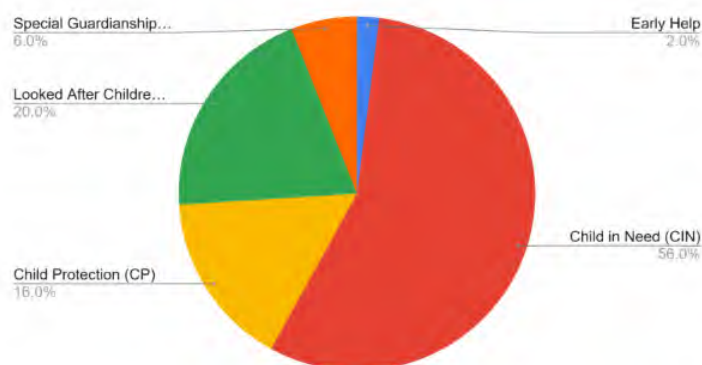
The number of pupils in resource provisions across Berkshire has continued to fluctuate and this highlights the challenge of having the level of staff needed when numbers are low, when CYP move into the area or require a change of placement. The mainstream bases for CYP with hearing loss use a variety of terms to refer to their provision -Hearing Deaf/ Hearing/ Total Communication resource base or Unit.

BSCS continues to provide specialist equipment for pupils in the Resource Bases for CYP who are deaf from the core budget provided by LAs as part of the joint arrangements. The Service also provides ongoing HI and VI technical training opportunities to ensure the most effective technology is being used with pupils. The management of the equipment via the Service, while time consuming, enables effective deployment of equipment in a timely and cost-effective way although this does impact significantly on the equipment budget. The pace of technological change within the sector requires careful handling of the current and projected needs so that there is a seamless transfer between preschool and school and between settings, and the upgrading of equipment. To facilitate successful inclusion the current model of provision enables the latest technology to be introduced in a managed way as the Service benefits from economies of scale and purchasing power.

3. Safeguarding

The Service has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL who provide additional cover during the school holidays. Termly DSL training is attended alongside other relevant courses and all staff have annual safeguarding training to Level 3. Lone Working training has been attended by all current teaching and support staff. Risk assessments have been put in place due to the peripatetic nature of the role, travelling between settings and home visiting. New members of the team automatically attend this training.

Table 13: Safeguarding Support for CYP 2024-25



The number of new safeguarding Cause for Concern alerts has increased to 87 for the year 24/25. The previous year there were 38. The increase in numbers is significant and is also a reflection of the way staff are proactively working with schools.

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3.1 Exclusions

In 2024/25 one pupil with VI was permanently excluded and one student who was deaf had a temporary exclusion. Both pupils have other identified special educational needs around ASD and behaviour in addition to their sensory impairment.

4. Training for Stakeholders

The Service offers a range of training for stakeholders and all schools and early years settings are allocated at least one training session every year as part of the ordinarily available provision from the Service. The training is bespoke to the needs of each child and can be delivered to the whole setting, key stage, subject area or for individual teachers and teaching assistants. Additional peer training is also offered.

The majority of training is delivered in person with a number of preschool workshops and sessions for parents delivered online. The Online Inset courses continue to be offered to all schools with mentorship from the team. The Accredited BTEC for Teaching Assistants is run in partnership with Mary Hare School for the Deaf over 5 days. The VI team run termly network meetings pan Berkshire for teaching assistants who work with pupils with VI. Additional training days are held for teaching assistants working with high needs pupils focusing on, e.g., braille, modification of teaching resources and using specialist technology. Teacher of the Deaf network meetings are held twice a year. All groups are well attended, and feedback is hugely positive on the quality of the training, specialist knowledge and practical support in meeting the needs of SI learners.

Training events for pupils and families also provide young people and adults an opportunity to meet others, share experiences and gain skills and knowledge which will support their understanding of their child's sensory impairment.

Transition picnics for pupils moving from primary to secondary were held in the summer term and gave pupils the opportunity to talk about getting ready for the change of size of

school, moving between subject teachers, how to use their equipment effectively and how to advocate for their needs as a sensory impaired young person. The whole day was summed up by one student who shared that they had learnt that it didn't matter what disability you may have, you can achieve the same things as everyone else.



I feel ready for secondary school and less worried about it. I feel more confident about telling people about what I need in the classroom.

I am the only person in my school like me so it was really good to chat to other young people

After lunch we discussed feelings about moving on up to year 7 and everyone decorated a jar which they filled with notes of what they felt their superpowers were. One member of the group shared a poster they had created about their deafness and the challenges this can present

I found out lots of ideas on how to make sure my teachers understand my hearing loss and I feel more confident about talking about it.

Meeting other pupils going to secondary school was great, especially talking to a year 7 pupil who was really helpful. It feels less scary now.

The majority of schools and settings take up an offer of training and where appropriate non take up is followed up by a member of the Leadership and Management Team to ensure there is whole school awareness of the needs of SI learners. Teachers also meet individually with staff in schools and settings and informal ongoing training is recorded in individual pupil records.

A total of 441 formal bespoke training sessions were held in schools, colleges and early years settings in 2024/25. The breakdown by Local Authority is provided in Table 14. In addition generic training events for other stakeholders, parent workshops and pupil events are summarised in Table 15.

Table 14: Number of formal training sessions recorded at the end of the academic year

	Training Sessions Delivered	
Reading	D/HL	66
	VI/ MSI	23
Bracknell Forest	D/HL	32
	VI/MSI	15
West Berkshire	D/HL	35
	VI/MSI	33
Wokingham	D/HL	82
	VI/MSI	31
Slough	D/HL	39
	VI/MSI	28
RBWM	D/HL	38
	VI/MSI	19
Total		441

Table 15: Range of additional service events and training

Pupils	• Skill Up - Shopping (secondary VI) • Skill Up - Cooking skills (primary and secondary events VI) • All Aboard Bus travel exploration (VI) • Moving on Up - Year 6 Transitioning to secondary school, bushcraft craft and team building(All) • Football Skill workshop (Deafness) • Moving On Developing Independence Skills for Adulthood (VI) • Think Right Feel Good - Development of Self advocacy skills and wellbeing (VI pupils) • Preparing for Adulthood - Careers advice, personal statements, interview skills and Disabled Students Allowance - preparation for applications, interviews and technology (All) • Years 5-8 - Curiosity and Creativity social event (All)
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	• Post 16 webinars (All)
Parents	• Preschool parent workshops -Developing Language, Listening and use of technology (Deafness) • Preschool parent workshops for parents of newly diagnosed (VI) • Preschool parent workshop - Learning at home (VI) • Family Fun Day -all children and young people • Information Session drop ins online day and evening sessions - twice a year. (all) • Making Reasonable Adjustments Parent Workshop (SI)
Professionals and Schools	• Supporting children with complex needs - for Speech and Language Therapists (MSI and SI) • Goal Ball School Leaders Course for PE specialists (VI) • General Deaf Awareness -online for schools • General Vision Awareness -online for schools • Impact of Glue Ear on development - Online for schools • Deaf Awareness - SEN case officers pan Berkshire • BTEC Course for Teaching Assistants - Deafness and Vision • Online Inset courses on deafness, vision and multisensory impairment • Teaching Assistant Networks (VI and Deafness) • TAs working with Tactile Learners -training for TAs supporting high needs CYP with VI. • Introduction to Deaf / Vision Awareness for SENCos • Social Care Sensory Impairment training - Bracknell Forest and RBWM

4.1 Impact

99% of the school, early years settings and college feedback scored 'strongly agree /agree ' that the training received has improved their knowledge and/or skills and that they now have a better understanding of the impact of a sensory impairment on learning.

99% reported that the training has enabled them to better support specifically the young person with SI in their setting.

Examples of specific actions participants identified to implement following BSCS training are provided below.

- **Equipment Use and Awareness:** Actions include being more careful with equipment, understanding how to properly wear and use the hearing aid/radio aid (e.g., positioning the microphone not too far from the mouth), and increasing confidence in using the "phone" (radio aid).
- **Communication Strategies:** Respondents plan to ensure pupils can always see their face when talking (even when wearing the radio aid) to facilitate lip-reading, and to minimize background noises during instruction.
- **Classroom Setup and Accessibility:** Teachers will focus on seating arrangements, incorporating subtitles, and reflecting on the accessibility of listening activities, particularly in subjects like French.
- **Understanding Student Needs:** There is a commitment to having a clearer understanding of students' individual needs and utilizing technology like the microphone to aid hearing.
- **Environmental Adjustments:** Respondents plan to improve accessibility by adjusting classroom positioning and font size on the board.
- **Increased Awareness:** Will roll out general awareness tips to staff and apply the clearer understanding that "tired eyes" is a possible condition requiring frequent breaks.
- **Environmental Adjustments:** Plan to implement better seating areas and use more simple visuals for pupils who are visually impaired.
- **Using technology:** Work on iPads to ensure that the students are getting the most out of the technology and making the most out of the features on it.
- **Classroom delivery:** Speak to teachers about the importance of talking through slides and rotating students seated next to a VI student.
- **Accessibility:** Students should have access to planned resources, modified materials and the right technology prior to the start of lessons with a recognition that detailed planning is required to ensure full access to learning in the classroom.
- **Listening and Encouragement:** Participants identified actions focused on being more open-minded when listening to their child and encouraging them to address areas where they need support.

- **Building Confidence:** Parents said they felt more positive about the future for their child and that they were more confident in understanding how they can support them with becoming more independent or using technology.
- **Utilising Technology:** A parent noted their children will be able to use certain apps to support the development of their visual skills.
- **Building Community and Perspective:** It was a good idea to have parents get together and share their experiences in dealing with visually impaired children which can help other parents in areas in which some parents need help with. E.g transition of child from primary to secondary school, using technology and resources, signposting to other organisations and support.

Making Science inclusive



Following the success of our tactile training day earlier in the year, the Service hosted a dedicated Science Training Day for Teaching Assistants supporting both our Large Print and Braille users.

The session focused on how best to support students in science lessons, covering lesson preparation, in-class

support, practical activities, and the adaptation of equipment and learning resources. From tactile diagrams to accessible lab setups, the emphasis was on making science inclusive and engaging for all learners.



Skill Up

During the Easter holidays, young people with VI developed their skills and confidence in the kitchen. Learning how to use talking scales and grating cheese to make delicious cheese straws and chocolate cereal nests. This event was held in partnership with Berkshire Vision. The young people are encouraged to continue to join in at home with food preparation and cooking.



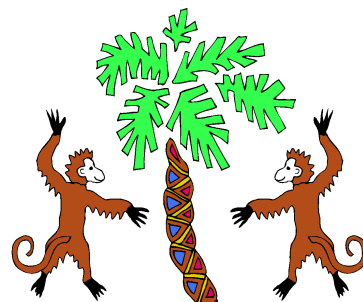
Surveys are sent out annually to all children and young people, parents, early years settings, special schools and colleges as part of the evaluation of the impact of the service which has been delivered. The return rate is about 50% for settings and around 25% for parents. Additional opportunities to gain parental views are taken at events and at the preschool groups.

5. Pre-School Groups - Chatty Monkeys and Busy Bees

The Service offers four preschool groups: Chatty Monkeys groups in Slough and Wokingham for those who have a hearing loss, a Busy Bees group in Wokingham for those with vision and or multisensory impairment and a stay and play session at Swings and Smiles in West Berkshire which is open to both VI and deaf children.



The programme delivered through the preschool groups is part of the core offer for all families. Each programme is tailored to the group of children attending and focuses on the development of those skills which are at risk as a consequence of a sensory loss. Parents have the opportunity for peer support and the opportunity to meet with other families. The groups are staffed by Teachers of the Deaf, Vision Impaired and Specialist Teaching Assistants. Attendance has ranged from 4 -16 families.





An Audiological Scientist from the Royal Berkshire hospitals attends every session to take earmould impressions and to offer advice. This partnership with health is highly valued by parents and ensures a strong team around the child and family.

Highlights of the year at Chatty Monkeys and Busy Bees included a trip for the groups to Legoland, the annual Christmas party with a visit from Father Christmas who also wears hearing aids, our graduation to school celebration and the cooking sessions with the children.



At Busy Bees the venue has a sensory room which has been a valuable resource to facilitate visual stimulation and the development of visual perception. Children are actively engaged in exploring objects and moving towards visually stimulating objects, sights, and sounds, indicating a growing awareness and desire for mobility.



5.1 Impact.

Parents report that they find the groups a key part of the support for their child. Meeting other parents is highly valued and the activities support the children's development, communication and visual needs through the modelling and coaching through structured routines, music and focused activities

In every Chatty Monkeys session I am challenged to be ambitious with the vocabulary I use with my profoundly deaf child and it works -he is making huge progress and I now see every activity we do as a listening and language opportunity'!

'I love Busy Bees, it's been a lifeline following my child's diagnosis and it has made me more confident in believing I can support my child. I am learning all the time'. It's also great fun and I get to meet other children.

Everything we do when we meet feels just like a normal playgroup but I realised that the activities actually have been planned with a clear focus on supporting language and communication through everyday routines and play. I come away with lots of ideas to try at home.

The preschool group gave my child such a strong foundation for when Lacey went to school and she was ready for the next stage of her education. I cried when we moved on from the group even though I know we still had our wonderful Teacher of the Deaf supporting us. Tuesdays will never be the same again! Thank you.

6. Social & Emotional Wellbeing, Social Activities for CYP with SI & their families

Service Family Fun Day

In June BSCS held their 5th Family Fun day at Beech lodge School in Maidenhead. The event provides an opportunity for families to meet each other and for the children to enjoy a range of different activities. Face painting and the bungee trampoline proved big hits and even Matilda the tortoise kept making her escape from the hall to have a look. There was something for everyone to enjoy from Lego, football - beat the goalie, arts and crafts, Reptiles, Giant games, Swings and Smiles resources, the Sensory bus to making popcorn and much more. Our partner organisations - National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), Berkshire Vision and VoluntEars - Volunteering Abroad were there to talk to families.

Over 100 families attended the event. Previous staff who had worked for the Service, ex students and some of our older pupils also helped running stalls. Sophie, one of our CYP with vision impairment did an amazing job as our 'Beat the Goalie' champion. Sophie is involved in mainstream high level football and is both an ambassador for the sport and also a positive role model for younger pupils. Our students who had gone on to university and employment also got to talk to parents and young people and were positive role models for the children.



During the May half term, 10 young people attended the All Aboard bus event where they got the opportunity to go behind the scenes at Reading bus depot. The visit as well as being a social event for young people to meet together is part of the programme for travel independence led by the service habilitation staff.



Reading FC social event

The event provided the opportunity for our young people who are deaf to train and play alongside Reading FC coaches while making new friends who are also supported by the BSCS. The event was made possible thanks to the team collaboration between BSCS, Reading FC, and FA Berks & Bucks and the Para Talent Team coach who

previously coached the Reading Deaf Football team! From skill-building drills to an action-packed match, pupils got stuck into the Game, showcasing incredible talent and teamwork. Those who opted in were connected to the group radio aid, allowing the coaches to use the assistive technology to ensure access for hearing instructions clearly - what a talented bunch of footballers we have!



7. The Impact of Service Delivery and Outcome Reporting

The Service continues to evaluate the impact of its service delivery and this is achieved primarily through recording outcomes for individual CYP and stakeholder feedback. This information informs team training and professional development alongside the Service Development Plan (SDP). For more information contact the Service.

The SDP areas for development are listed below.

- Review special school offer to schools, data collection and database, packages of support and guidance for staff.
- Development of the workforce to enable those working with SI learners to have the skills and knowledge to make learning accessible and inclusive. This is in addition to the bespoke training offered to all settings as part of the service delivery for each CYP with SI
- Service restructure of leadership roles and UPS to be reviewed as to its effectiveness in driving Service improvement
- Introduction of a Berkshire wide Parent /Carer Forum for SI
- Provision of a Deaf Instructor/ Tutor for families and CYP who are deaf using British Sign Language (BSL) /or parents who want to develop their skills to use with their preschool children who have hearing loss. The post will initially be part of a project for 1 year.
- Provision of centrally employed Teaching Assistants to support VI pupils who are blind across Berkshire to address the challenges around recruitment, retention and quality of support.
- Development of the use of the Curriculum Framework for Vision Impairment by the VI team
- Development of the use of the Deaf Curriculum Framework for CYP who are deaf by the Teacher of the Deaf Team
- Development of joint clinics and improved multidisciplinary working with eye clinics in order to address the persisting inequities in health, social position, life chances and participation that can result from childhood VI
- Social and Emotional Wellbeing of CYP with SI to be embedded in programme planning
- Redevelopment of the BSCS website
- Review of the provision for pupils with a diagnosis of Auditory Processing Disorder

7.1 Individual Programmes Delivered by BSCS Teachers

Quality First Teaching documents are routinely given to all schools and are available on the BSCS website as a tool to highlight the responsibilities of the mainstream teacher to

provide an inclusive learning environment which meets the needs of SI learners. The document outlines the role of the specialist QTVI /QTOD/ QTMSI.

Staff agree all outcomes with parents at the pre-school phase and with schools and early years settings for older pupils. Outcomes are recorded on the PARIS system in family plans and are reported on centrally each term to inform pupil progress meetings. Outcomes may be short term or occasionally longer spanning across the year particularly for pupils on an advisory programme.

Curriculum and Teaching outcomes have been a focus of support and reflect the degree of specialist teaching which is required to provide CYP with the knowledge and skills to access learning as independently as possible. Additional objectives aim to remove the barriers to learning through effective use of technology, teaching strategies and training of the workforce.

7.2 Outcomes

98% of outcomes set for individual pupils are fully achieved. These are recorded at the end of the academic year. Factors which may impact on outcomes are reviewed and discussed at pupil progress meetings with team leaders which may lead to a change in level of provision, help with setting SMART targets or the introduction or review of additional technology. Pupils on advisory programmes are given one outcome around inclusion and access to learning with an additional outcome for use of specialist technology.

7.3 Delivered visits

Table 16 reports on the delivery of core visits in the six local authorities. All of the LAs had 100% delivery.

Table 16: Delivered Core visits 24/25

Local Authority	% of core visits delivered
Slough	100%
RBWM	100%
Bracknell	100%
Wokingham	100%
Reading	100%
West Berks	100%

The Service continues to collect assessment and monitoring data for all pupils including phonic screening results, key stage and public examination results This continues to require further development as staff are reliant on some information being shared by schools, which can be challenging. Going forward all schools are required to share the data as part of the initial referral agreement.

7.4 Early Years data

BSCS supports deaf children from birth and records their progress via Success from the Start, a national monitoring tool which our Teachers of the Deaf use with families to set next steps, celebrate achievements and flag up any concerns. This informs changes in

support and data can also be used to provide evidence when requesting additional support from other services and when making requests for a multi professional assessment. The Vision impairment teachers use a similar document called the Developmental Journal.

7.5 Early Years Foundation Stage Outcomes

The cohort of children at EYFS is small, particularly in VI and therefore the results need to be looked at with caution. The number of VI children with additional needs in the cohort was high at 50%

Table 17: Early Years Foundation Stage Good Level of Development (GLD) 24/25

EYFS	DFE All Children	BSCS Children	Percentage gap	National Deaf
Deafness	68%	56%	12%	42%
Vision /MSI	68%	41%	17%	-

Compared to the national figures for all children achieving a good level of development at EYFS those with sensory impairment have a significant percentage gap. Compared to the NDCS DFE figures for deaf children in England, the BSCS cohort is performing significantly better than all deaf children nationally.

Early intervention, improved tracking and curriculum development within the Service is enabling many of our young people to be more ready for Year 1 however the focus will continue on closing this gap for all of our children supported by the Service

7.6 Key Stage 4 outcomes

Table 18 reports the results for achieving a grade 5 or above in Maths and English. The cohort of young people taking GCSEs does not include pupils in special schools. Figures from the DFE are shown where available and the National Deaf Children analysis of the data for all young people in brackets highlights how pupils supported by the Service are doing significantly better than the national figures for the deaf. For VI young people they are doing significantly better than the national figures

Table 18 Key Stage 4 results 2024-25

Subject	BSCS D/HL	BSCS VI	National DFE (All Children)
Percentage of children achieving a grade 5 or above in both English and Maths	50% (34% NDCS)	54.54%	45.4%

After Key Stage 4, 57.15% of students who were deaf went on to college, including settings outside Berkshire. 35.71% remained in a school sixth form. One student (3.57%) moved to an independent school sixth form and one student went into an apprenticeship.

For students with a vision impairment 33.33% stayed at a school sixth form and 33.33% went to college. Of the rest one student (6.66%) went to the Royal National College, 6.66% are no longer on caseload and for 20% no information was available ? NFA.

7.7 Post year 13 (Key Stage 5) Destination

Post year 13 destinations are used as an outcome measure for all of our mainstream pupils. In the future the service will look at introducing a 5 and 10 year post year 13 survey as part of collecting longitudinal data for pupils supported by the Service.

Table 19: Post Year 13 Outcomes by Destinations

Destination	D/HL 20/21	D/HL 21/22	D/HL 22/23	D/HL 23/24	D/HL 24/25
University	8	7	7	8	9
Gap year followed by university	2	1	0	2	0
Further Education College	2	5	3	4	4
Apprenticeship	2	2	3	3	1
Employment	1	1	2	1	0
NEET	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	1	2	2
Total	15	16	16	20	16

Destination	VI/MSI 20/21	VI/MSI 21/22	VI/MSI 22/23	VI/MSI 23/24	VI/MSI 24/25
University	9	6	5	5	8
Gap year followed by university	0	4	1	1	1
Further Education College	2	3	3	4	2
Apprenticeship	1	0	0	0	0
Employment	1	1	0	1	0
NEET	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	0	1	5
Total	13	14	9	12	16

Students moving from school to Further or Higher Education, apprenticeships or work have been given specialist support around applications, interviews and applying for Disabled Student Allowance and other support. Two online Post 16 Transition Webinars were offered to CYPs and their parents in Year 12 and 13 both of which were well attended. These are repeated on an annual basis.

Early preparation and planning for transition has been key in order to ensure students have the right equipment and support in place going forward before they start their courses which has been an issue in the past. It is noted that the cohort of young people is small.

7.8 Service Guarantees

The service guarantees are used as a benchmark to review aspects of service delivery.

The following mechanisms are used to assess performance of the Service:

- Budget Management outcomes
- Performance Management of staff
- Service evaluation
- Service Development Plan
- CYP SI outcomes and records maintained by Berkshire SCS
- Joint Management Group termly meetings
- Caseload are shared termly with all partner LAs
- Parent and Professionals Around the Child Meetings alongside Family and Programme Plans
- Annual reviews for individual pupils
- Meetings with Local Authority Commissioners and SEND managers

Table 20: Service Guarantees Met

All Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service (BSCS) Teachers of the Deaf / Vision and Multisensory Impairment hold the mandatory qualification for working with sensory impaired learners or will have completed the training within three years of joining the Service	100%
All BSCS Habilitation staff are registered qualified Habilitation Specialists	100%
All BSCS Qualified Educational Specialist Teaching Assistants (QUESTAs) hold an additional accredited qualification in SI or are in training	100%
All pupils supported by the BSCS will be provided with a written pupil profile / report at least annually.	100%
All formal BSCS assessment reports are completed within the statutory time limits.	98%
Initial contact to all new school age referrals is made within five working days during school term time	98%
Following diagnosis, the TOD Deaf will contact the child's parents within two working days if diagnosed by the Newborn Hearing Screening programme	100%
Contact with parent /carers is within five working days during term time for all preschoolers following a confirmed diagnosis of a vision impairment.	100%
All new referrals are provided with a written formal report within eight working weeks following receipt of the new referral form.	97%
All Berkshire mainstream schools and Local Authority Special Schools with sensory impairment learners are offered a bespoke training package and signposting to other training events.	100%
All parents /carers of BSCS pre-school children with sensory impairment within Berkshire are offered access to our specialist pre-school group provision.	100%
Evaluation of the Service is undertaken annually using staff and user surveys, pupil outcomes, and an analysis of our stakeholder feedback	Yes

The online referral process, clear criteria for referral and tightening up of the medical confirmation of a hearing or vision loss has enabled the referral deadlines to be met for almost all children and young people. The contact with parents /carers within two working days during term time for all preschoolers is now met for all new referrals. The completion of the formal written report by the teachers is impacted by pupil absence and challenges around arranging visits with schools in order to complete assessments.

8. Stakeholder Feedback

8.1 Complaints

The Service received no formal complaints in 2024/2025

8.2 Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service Annual Survey Summary

The Service carries out a range of stakeholder feedback surveys which provide evidence of the impact of service delivery and areas for improvement. Feedback has been sought via parent focus sessions at the preschool groups, questionnaires after workshops, feedback from training delivery and surveys. Overall completion of surveys at the end of the academic year from parents is low and this will be addressed through review of the platforms used, the timing and the communication from the Service.

Pupil views are sought in the planning of social activities and transition events and feedback is supported through verbal, written and physical responses which informs future planning.

As a result of stakeholder feedback the Service has moved forward with providing centrally employed specialist Teaching Assistants in schools to work with those pupils who are blind . The Service has also employed a Deaf Instructor supporting sign language skills within the team. They also attend Chatty Monkeys and work with individual young people. Additional summaries of stakeholder feedback are available from the Service.

8.3 Educational Settings Feedback

Table 21: School questionnaires summary

- **Training and Equipment Support:** BSCS staff provided face-to-face training for teaching and support staff, including CPD training for all staff, on topics such as deafness, supporting severely visually impaired students, using radio aids, hearing aid maintenance, and other equipment.
- **Classroom Strategies and Environment:** Staff were advised on how sensory conditions affect children and provided with recommendations for adapting the classroom environment, including seating arrangements, lighting, modification of resources, and general in-class strategies.
- **Direct Guidance and Consultation:** Support included regular meetings, discussions, and informative feedback sessions with SENCo, teachers, and TAs to discuss children's needs, set targets, and provide ongoing guidance on specific elements of the child's learning.

- **Resource and Technology Access:** Staff were supported with accessing technology (e.g., for reading online books), given shared resources, and helped with understanding and modeling the use of various equipment.
- **Assessment and Reporting:** Support included detailed reports with clear targets/actions, feedback on assessment scores, and recommendations for IEP and EHCP reviews.
- **Pupil Progress and Independence:** The service has helped pupils grow in confidence, particularly in preparation for the transition to secondary school, and supported others in becoming more independent in using their radio aid.
- **Staff Training and Awareness:** Staff awareness has increased, and regular visits ensure equipment checks and training on the importance of equipment care and maintenance, including handling/fitting hearing aids.
- **Effective Support Methods:** Support includes working directly with staff, children, and families; providing information on technology (like the Roger Touchscreen radio aid); and offering advice on suitable resources (e.g., keyboards and devices) to ensure learning is accessible.
- **Device Management and Accessibility:** The service provides support in the effective use of devices such as the BAHAs device, and advises on the use of technology and modification of resources.
- **Positive Individual Support:** Teachers were specifically mentioned as providing excellent support.
- **Advisory and Staff Support:** Respondents noted that staff are advised and receive professional opinions on supporting children and removing barriers to learning, including clear explanations of hearing and vision loss, and receive advice on social strategies and encouraging pupil interaction.
- **Promoting Self-Advocacy and Technology Use:** Support included helping a child develop a PowerPoint presentation explaining their device, promoting and supporting the use of technology for paired/group class work, and assistance with self-confidence.
- **Peer and Classroom Understanding:** Staff worked with classmates to help them understand the challenges a young person faces and how to support them in school.
- **Staff Expertise and Support:** Multiple staff members were highlighted for being highly knowledgeable, professional, passionate, and happy to answer questions. Staff are described as being supportive, well-organized, and providing invaluable advice.
- **Communication and Availability:** The team is consistently easy to talk to, efficient, and easily accessible for advice via email, with quick response times. Staff are proactive, available when required, accommodating to school needs, and have attended important meetings like annual reviews.
- **Impact on Pupils and Staff:** The service provides excellent support for children and staff, with staff acting as strong advocates for pupils. Support includes good recommendations, thorough reports with targets, and helping school staff fully understand pupils' needs and implement vital interventions.
- **Realistic and Flexible Approach:** Staff provide realistic advice that considers the nature and scale of the setting, including budget constraints, and are flexible in supporting the school. However, one respondent noted that communication from the Sensory Consortium Service (SCS) has at times been unhelpful in appreciating the context of supporting many other students with diverse needs.
- **Areas for Improvement:** One respondent noted they do not always receive feedback from visits verbally after lessons. .

8.4 Parental feedback -Schools Age

- **Equipment and Technical Support:** The Teacher of the Deaf (TOD) assists by ensuring the child has the correct equipment, including training teachers on its importance and use.
- **Child Advocacy and Self-Awareness:** Support includes helping children understand poor listening conditions and how to advocate for their own needs, while also training teachers about the child's hearing aids and providing support when the parent struggled to get it from the school.
- **Communication and Updates:** The TOD maintains open, honest, and available communication, providing updates on the child's progress, feeding back on sessions with the school and son, explaining what is happening, and offering assistance via phone/email by signposting different issues/queries.
- **School Collaboration and Feedback** Support involves observing the child and giving feedback on performance in lessons, communicating with the hospital and school, and providing advice to school teaching staff on supporting the child
- **Detailed Reporting and Insight:** The TOD provides valuable insight information through annual reports, explaining the support the child needs (e.g., the report for the parent's daughter) and helping to identify areas needing attention.
- **Positive Feedback on Support Staff:** The Teacher of the Deaf was described as amazing at supporting H, raising difficult discussions with the college, and advocating for H's needs as a deaf learner. Others were noted as fabulous, and very clear with feedback about their child's progress.
- **Quality of Support:** Several respondents were very pleased with the support, noting that the Teacher of the Deaf has been "beyond expectations" and that they feel they can rely on staff if they need support.
- **Positive Feedback on Staff Support:** Respondents praised specific staff members for providing great support, being very helpful and compassionate, and regularly visiting schools to ensure children have the necessary equipment.
- **Specialist Support and Habilitation:** Support included providing habilitation services, helping a child learn Braille after losing vision in Year 7, and supplying technology to assist with schoolwork.
- **Advocacy and School Needs:** Staff supported parents in advocating for the correct support to be implemented by the school and offered advice regarding a child's needs within the school setting and preparation for exams.
- **Information and Assessment:** Parents were advised on various topics, including transport apps and other assessments their child qualified for.
- **Communication Gaps:** Some parents reported a lack of communication, noting that they had not received feedback from the latest visit or contact from the new visual impairment teacher.
- **Family Events and Networking:** More family events and workshops are desired, with one respondent mentioning positive feedback on a recent children's confidence workshop that provided support and allowed them to meet other parents.
- **Consistent Support and Helpfulness:** Respondents generally reported having excellent support and feeling supported by their service providers, describing them as very kind and helpful, particularly mentioning the efforts of the QTVI and habilitation officers.
- **Positive Connections and Specific Efforts:** Specific positive examples include great connections with staff at school, excellent habilitation helpers, and a QTVI giving up a day off to allow a student to complete an exam at home.

- **Concerns about Communication and Recent Decrease in Support:** One parent noted that while support was previously excellent over many years, it has become minimal in the last year, with a lack of updates on a new teacher who has yet to contact them regarding the transition to secondary school.

Preschool Parents

- **Specific Support for Children:** Support included advising on how best to support the child going forward, suggestions for supporting communication, and aiding with speech and language development.
- **Service Effectiveness and Support:** Multiple parents expressed high satisfaction with the service, highlighting the "Extremely supportive and lovely team," the welcoming and kind staff, and the positive impact on their child's development, specifically crediting the "chatty monkeys group and her teacher of the deaf" for their child's progress.
- **Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) Performance:** The ToD was frequently praised, with one respondent calling them "Great" and another emphasising how their child "wouldn't have excelled as much as she has" without them.
- **Areas for Improvement:** One respondent suggested improvements in BSL skills among staff, promoting BSL for inclusion, and increasing the number of Deaf adults on the team to provide firsthand understanding of deafness.
- **Technical and Practical Assistance:** The Teacher of the Deaf assisted with practical matters such as teaching an easier way to retube and helping to get an audiology appointment.
- **Emotional and Transition Support:** Support was provided to help with confidence, understanding the use/need for hearing aids, feeling part of a community, and managing the transition ahead of primary school.

8.5 Pupil Voice

A range of different approaches are used to listen and collect the views of the children and young people about their support and events they have attended.

This includes:

- Involving pupils in setting and reviewing their outcomes and how they would like to be supported -what works well, what do they think they would like help with.
- Discussion groups online or in person at the transition and social events
- Feedback at social and family events - pictorial charts, balls in a tube
- Questionnaires tailored to the age and cognitive needs of the CYP

Table 22: Pupil Questionnaire responses Summer 2024

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel confident I can talk to the BSCS teacher about my hearing/ vision/ MSI	81%	19%		
My visiting teacher asks me about what I need help and support with	85%	12%	3%	

I can say what helps me to learn best in the classroom	62%	38%		
I receive the right level of support from my teacher	86%	6%	6%	

CYP told us about the kind of support they found most helpful

- Supporting in class and modifying materials
- Developing my understanding of their hearing or vision
- Having 1:1 teaching about things they find difficult
- Telling the teacher how to support in the classroom.
- Working in a small group with peers
- Teaching how to use their technology.
- Moving from primary to secondary school.
- Helping to get ready for interviews and applying for DSG for university
- Talking to me about how I am doing.

8.6 As an outcome of feedback

Request for development of more British Sign Language Skills amongst staff

The development of BSL within the Service is a objective in the Service Development Plan. The number of Teacher of the Deaf staff with level 2 signing has increased and several team members are also working towards this level. One member of staff is currently on a level 3 course. The Service has also employed a deaf instructor whose first language is BSL and they are providing additional training for all staff at every team meeting.

Additional sign language classes are being funded through the local National Deaf Children's Society and also are planned in Slough and Reading through the Deaf centres.



Parents have reported that they do not always tend to receive feedback from visits verbally after lessons

All teaching staff are required to make contact by telephone with parents at the beginning of the academic year and are reminded at team meetings of the importance of joint working with parents. Staff are asked to agree with parents how they wish to receive feedback for teaching children who they see more regularly ie email, telephone call, home visit, meeting in school and to agree within the limitations of the caseload management for staff how often this should be as this is not usually possible after every visit if the support is ongoing. .

For pupils on an advisory programme the teachers are asked to contact the family by email introducing themselves, outlining the programme the young person is on and also inform them when visiting.

Parents are not aware when there has been a change of teacher during the year.

All staff have been reminded to contact families if they have taken over a pupil during the year and to follow this up with an email. Reminders to staff are given at the staff

briefings, service and team meetings alongside the sending out of contact details to families. .

[Young people would like more opportunities to meet other young people with SI](#)

The number of social events has been increased across the year however take up has not always been great with the result that some events have been cancelled. The Service is working with the NDCS community Connector, the local NDCS group and Berkshire Vision to map out more opportunities for events to take place.

9. Working with other Stakeholders

Working in partnership with both national organisations and local authority partners continues, with the Service representing LAs in tribunal work and providing input to the development of SEND strategy and Local Authority SEND Inspections. The Service plays an active role with the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NATSIP) who are a strategic partner with the DFE. The Head of Service sits on their reference group and has contributed to national training for other Heads of Services. The Head of Service has been invited to attend a number of DFE workstreams for sensory impairment on supporting the mainstream workforce to meet the needs of SI learners effectively and sits on the BATOD mentoring scheme for Teachers of the Deaf.

The Service works closely with the National and local Deaf Children's Society, Guide Dogs, VIEW, Berkshire Vision, Dingley, Swings and Smiles and the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

The Leadership team have continued to contribute to specific Local Authority projects including the auditing of provision in two hearing resource bases and contributing to Auditing of EHCPs and work on Sensory Impairment banding tools.

The team participates in and have chaired the pan Berkshire CHSWG (Children's Hearing Services Working Group). The group is made up of parents and professionals who work with deaf children and young people. They meet regularly to help improve health, education and social care services for deaf children, young people and their families. As stakeholders, group members have the opportunity to share their views, feedback on any progress made against the CHSWG action plan, raise issues that are affecting deaf children and young people, and provide the voice of parents. The minutes are available on the BSCS website under Advice for Families.

The VI Coordinator attends the LVSG (Low Vision Service Group) and has regular meetings with Ophthalmology and the Eye Care Liaison Officers ECHLOs. The BSCS educational audiologist continues to attend clinics twice a week with audiology in two hospitals across the county to provide a seamless service between health and education for families.

Monthly Habilitation meetings bring together the Community Paediatrician, Speech and Language Therapy, Audiology and BSCS focusing on early intervention and family working at both hospitals. The meetings provide a valued opportunity to share key information around concerns about individual children and as a result action is able to be taken quickly by the relevant professional team leading to positive outcomes for children with SI.

The Service continues to work with the voluntary organisations to support social opportunities for groups of children with vision impairment or who are deaf. Events are promoted via the Service website, Facebook page and BSCS staff.

10. Staffing

The BSCS has a workforce of 38 professionals made up of our central service support team and Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (12.5fte), Qualified Teachers of CYP with Vision Impairment (10.8fte) Qualified Multisensory Impairment Teacher (1.0fte) , Specialist Teaching Assistants (6.4fte), two Qualified Habilitation specialists (1.6fte) and our Deaf Instructor (0.2fte) .

Sensory impairment is low incidence in terms of disability and recruitment of qualified Teachers of the Deaf, Vision and Multisensory Impairment continues to be highly challenging within the sector. The Service has one Teacher of the Deaf in Training in 2024/25. New team members have a programme of induction which lasts over two years and if they are undertaking the mandatory qualification, they have additional study and teaching placement time allocated.

Staff work across several Local Authorities to meet the required delivery of visits as agreed by LAs and to provide for the additional inclusion premium contracts. Staff are routinely working with large caseloads of advisory programmes which is a challenge.

Holiday cover is built into the Service provision with all new referrals of babies diagnosed via the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme meeting the national Quality Standards of contacting families within two working days following diagnosis. There are not the same quality standards for VI, but the service aims to replicate this where possible and cover for new referrals in the school holidays is also provided.

10.2 Qualified Registered Habilitation Officers (Habilitation)

The Habilitation staff work closely with the QTVIs to develop independence and mobility skills for our severely sighted /blind CYP. They also carry out environmental audits to support CYP's access in their setting, providing advice on accessibility. A significant element of their work involves independent travel skills including using public transport or/and learnt walking routes. The training provided is part of the habilitation curriculum.

Staff continue to work closely with Berkshire Vision and Guide Dogs running joint events in the holidays focusing on developing independence including activities such as cooking, public transport experiences and life skills e.g shopping.

10.3 BSCS Professional Development

Professional development opportunities for staff are provided through whole Service and individual team training across the year. The programme includes twice yearly technical update days focusing on the introduction and use of specialist equipment which involves working with Cochlear Implant teams and technology manufacturers.

Additional training days have included the introduction of the Deaf Curriculum, on Cortical Vision Impairment, VI, the Curriculum Framework for VI and ongoing use of new technology.

11. Equipment

The Service holds an equipment database which is held centrally and is available on request. Schools are asked to sign a loan form for equipment to cover loss or damage.

Secondary schools are expected to fund non specialist equipment costing less than £150 and Primary schools less than £100 from their own budget. In addition, schools are expected to provide generic equipment to support pupils with sensory impairment such as Kindles, i-Pads and laptops. I Pad Pros are purchased from the equipment budget for some pupils depending on their eligibility and access needs.

The costs of repairs and new equipment is continually rising which has added pressure on the equipment budget. The pace of technology advances is also significant as equipment becomes obsolete or there are new software applications. As a large Service we are able to benefit from economies of scale and the movement of equipment to meet pupil needs across a wide geographical area. Technological advances are enabling our SI learners to develop their independence and access to learning in the classroom which supports more successful inclusion in mainstream schools.

11.1 Equipment Report 2024/25

2024/25 Equipment	Audiological Equipment	VI Equipment
Equipment and Accessories	£52,605	21,681
Repairs	£4,786	£788.51
Total Spend	£57,391	£22,469

The number of students with a profound vision impairment continues to grow and technology for Braillists also continues to develop. In 2025/26 the current BrailleNotes will begin to be updated which will involve considerable investment.

The Service provides over 300 Deaf Children and Young People (DCYP) with Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). The cost of the equipment continues to increase year on year and the continuous price rise and the increase in numbers of DCYP needing access to the equipment has stretched the Audiology budget year on year. The cost of repairs has also risen above inflation. More of the radio aid receivers are now integrated into the hearing aids and this requires close cooperation and joint working with the audiology departments. Changes to hearing aid procurement has a significant impact if a different manufacturer is used and therefore the close partnership with health colleagues is crucial.

12. Financial Review

The Joint Arrangement core budget outturn for the financial year 2024/25 was £1,740,121. The main costs continue to be allocated to staffing and the joint equipment budget.

Financial accountability is ensured through reporting to the bi-annual joint management meetings with the six education officer representatives from the Local Authorities and through submission of service accounts to the joint Finance Officers Group. Internal auditing procedures are administered by the Host Authority who also provide monitoring and support with legal, personnel and training issues.

The Local Authority Caseloads provide detail on the pupil core and inclusion premium packages. Delivered visits for pupils are included on the summer term caseloads and any under delivery on the overall LA caseload is reimbursed to the individual Authority.

The continued generation of a surplus enables the Service to cover the additional mandatory specialist SI training required to meet the staffing needs alongside managing the staffing budget across both the Academic and Financial Year due to the additional and often late confirmation of the significant number of inclusion premium visits. The surplus also supports the purchase and upgrading of additional specialist equipment and staff laptops. The surplus is often generated due to a short fall in available qualified staff and hence existing staff have taken on additional caseload in the short term. through the inclusion premium contracts which sit outside the core Joint Arrangement budget.

13. Conclusion

The Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service is currently celebrating its 28th year as a joint arrangement between the six Berkshire Local Authorities. The success of the Service relies on its partnership working with families, educational settings, and our SEND teams.

The Service continues to be highly regarded nationally and it strives to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to provide the best outcomes for its SI learners

The Service has been able to continue to provide teaching and support for our children and young people and their families through flexible and creative ways of working and resilience of staff to overcome the barriers to learning.

Additional information is available on the BSCS website or on request.

Jane Peters

Head of Service