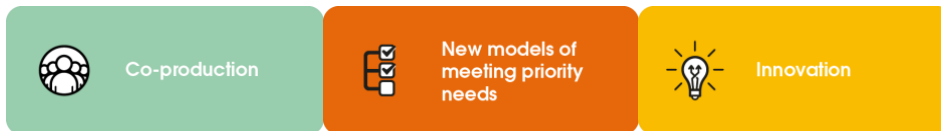




HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE



Peopletoo working with
Swindon Borough Council

SEND Improvement Programme & MTFP for Swindon Borough Council

The Challenge

The national picture of the unpredictable demand in children's services has made medium-term planning difficult for Councils. While Swindon Borough Council's (SBC) medium-term financial plan (MTFP) accounted for most services, children's services remained an area of uncertainty. SBC was working to implement its Ofsted improvement plan following an inadequate inspection outcome, whilst also needing to understand the associated financial implications. Alongside this, the Council needed to address strategic and operational challenges across SEND provision and service delivery to ensure long-term sustainability.

Peopletoo's Approach and Delivery

Working closely with finance, performance, and children's services teams to analyse historical trends, model a 'do nothing' scenario, and review 2024/25 budget assumptions, Peopletoo assessed improvement priorities, quantified financial impacts, and identified further opportunities to improve SBC's financial position. The analysis informed the development of a robust, realistic MTFP for children's services.

Key components of the work included:

- Financial Analysis & Benchmarking: Comparing SBC with peer councils to understand spend, demand, and placement sufficiency.

- Improvement Plan Costing: Estimating the financial impact of planned actions, with a focus on cost avoidance and efficiency.
- Opportunity Identification: Highlighting areas for savings and transformation.
- MTFP Development: Forecasting future demand and setting out a clear financial roadmap.

This included supporting delivery planning with scoping, risk assessments, and resourcing. As Swindon's SEND Improvement Partner, Peopletoo delivered a broader package of work. This included:

- A forecasting tool aligned with DfE standards, allowing SBC to model interventions.
- A co-produced SEND banding framework, with engagement from schools and financial modelling to support phased implementation.
- A new Alternative Provision (AP) strategy and delivery model based on national best practice.
- A review of transitions to ASC, with recommendations to improve governance and planning.
- An options appraisal for H2S transport, with a preferred delivery model and implementation plan.

The work was delivered collaboratively, through workshops, data reviews, and co-design with stakeholders. Tools and frameworks were tested and iteratively refined, with training and rollout plans in place to support implementation.

The Impact: Outcomes Achieved

SBC has a tailored forecasting tool for more accurate financial projections and impact assessment, alongside a co-produced SEND banding framework that enhances transparency and sustainability. Additionally, the groundwork for a new AP strategy has been established, with an improvement plan set for finalisation.

SBC received a detailed and realistic MTFP for children's services, outlining key assumptions linked to demand, inflation, transformation, and market conditions. The cumulative impact was a projected £40 million reduction in spend over three years, with expenditure in the final year £14.9 million lower than the unmitigated scenario. SBC also gained a set of delivery plans ready for implementation, supporting both immediate action and long-term financial resilience.

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