

CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	16/11/2023
REPORT OF	Director of Children's Services
SUBJECT	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Council has a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure the provision of sufficient and suitable pupil places for its children.

Analysis of current and future educational need for children with Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND) who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has identified future shortfalls of sufficient numbers and suitable local education Resource Specialist Provision pupil places to meet current and future predicted needs. There is a need to create and fund local places to prevent children and young people going out of area and remain educated in their local community.

The identified rolling programmes of Schools' High Need provision of new Resource Specialist Provision of pupil places will contribute directly towards the Council's strategic priority of supporting the development of 'Stronger Communities' by providing a fit for purpose service model aligned to the use of physical property, reducing the need to send our children out of area which continues to support communities across the Borough.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently the activity around SEND is to mitigate a £54million predicted overspend on the High Needs Block by 2028 as well as deliver activity outlined in the Education and Inclusion Strategy, SEND strategy, SEND joint commissioning strategy and SEND sufficiency strategy.

The key activities can be divided into themes as follows:

- a. 20 week timeliness key performance indicator being monitored by the DfE.
- b. SEMH free school awarded by the DfE in March 2023 (National programme)
- c. SEND sufficiency plans and capital programme of works (Capital grant funding over three years until August 2025)
- d. Delivering Better Value in SEND (£1million grant funded 2 year project)
- e. Other SEND activity

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

This report is being presented as an update on SEND as requested by the Scrutiny Panel.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 20 week timeliness

The department of Education continue to monitor the timeliness of North East Lincolnshire turning around requests for EHCPs in 20 weeks. There are a number of factors to the current challenge:

- Educational psychology assessments needed for each request received
- Social care contributions on the care section
- Lack of specialist provision and placements for children to attend
- The volume of requests being received

Actions taken since January 2023:

- Redirecting work of the Educational Psychology team to focus on statutory work, balancing training demands and commissioned work.
- Designated Social Care Officer came into Post 1st January 2023 – undertaken training and work across Children’s Social care to raise awareness and develop understanding.
- Developed the Delivering Better Value grant fund application to focus on inclusivity and how the LA could fund support to help schools strengthen their graduated response and meet Childrens’ needs without the need for an EHCP. Now in mobilisation phase.
- Worked with people and Culture to explore overseas recruitment. Unfortunately, recruitment cycle in August proved unsuccessful.

1.2 SEMH Free School

Local Authority officers have been working with central DfE colleagues to prepare the identified land, both in terms of securing a lease from LHP as well as completing required land surveys on the identified site. A range of Local Authority officers met with the DfE at Open Door in June and walked around the proposed school site.

As a result of the work still underway and the assurances provided by the Planning Department at North East Lincs, the build has been moved forwards to a September 2025 opening.

This was determined before the current position the Department for Education faced around the RAAC, as currently meetings about the free school have been halted. It is unknown how long for and the impact this may have on the timeline agreed before the summer break.

Recruitment is underway for a Multi-Academy Trust to sponsor the school, with applications closing on 31st August 2023. This is a central Department for Education process, where the Local Authority have a place on the panel. It is estimated that a Trust will be appointed by January 2024.

1.3 SEND sufficiency and Capital programme

The first Resource Specialist provision officially opened on Friday 15th September at Littlecoates Primary Academy, part of Wellspring Academy Trust. This provides 12 places for children with EHCPs aged 4-7. It is only a provision that

can accommodate children up to the end of key stage 1, with the vision that the majority of the children who attend the 'Launch Pad' will be able to return to their local mainstream primary school during key stage 1, and at the latest in time to start key stage 2.

The Local Authority are currently working with two other Primary schools and as a result of the Delivering Better Value in SEND launch in July, pending four conversations with other Primary schools during autumn term too.

Primary school A the Local Authority is working with them and in conjunction with the National Autistic Society to create a 'Cullum Centre' these are specialist provisions for children with both an EHCP and a diagnosis of autism. The expectation is that children attend mainstream classes for 70% of the time, and specialist support in an onsite bespoke unit for 30% of their timetable.

Primary school B the Local Authority are working with the setting to establish a provision for up to 30 children with a primary need of SEMH. The setting will hopefully start with a smaller cohort of children (6) from January 2024 to pilot their approach and then grow incrementally over a further 18 month period.

The two new Primary schools being built at Waltham and Scartho will also have 12 place resource specialist provisions integrated as part of the build. The phasing in of these places will align with the phasing in of the main school year groups.

There has been a conversation with another Trust who run one of our secondary settings who are keen to develop provision on their site. This is being explored. Secondary engagement overall however to develop Resource Specialist Provision has been challenging. Despite conversations with 4 secondary settings over the last academic year, nothing has progressed further than initial conversations with headteachers and Trusts due to concerns cited by headteachers about:

- The impact on performance data
- The impact on attendance
- The impact on Ofsted inspection judgements
- It not being the right school for SEND provision

Officers are also exploring options to develop a provision for children with complex needs such as Learning Disabilities and Autism. Currently there is a cohort of children and young people who attend independent day and residential settings out of area as there isn't appropriate provision in borough.

1.4 Delivering Better Value in SEND

The quarter 2 report is attached for reading at Appendix 1. This provides the specific detail about the elements of the project and what we have spent, completed etc. This is a quarterly report that the Local Authority are expected to submit with the agreement of all key stakeholders. The summary of the report is below. The ask of Schools forum members is that each quarter could I arrange a 30 minute max online meeting to go through the report for feedback and challenge.

The project has been mobilising since the grant funding was awarded in March. Aligned to the project plan submitted and approved the Local Authority have undertaken recruitment to provide additional capacity for the duration of the project:

- Project lead
- Schools project officer
- 2 x data analysts for SEND

Procurement and commissioning of contracts has also taken place to facilitate additional services and support during the next academic year.

A launch of the programme took place in July at the Town Hall. Key note speakers included; Rob Walsh, Helen Kenyon and Janice Spencer.

A schools launch was successfully held on 13th September with the LEARN SEND teaching hub who have been commissioned to provide consultancy support for all mainstream settings in North East Lincolnshire to help them evaluate their SEND provision. This was positively received overall and recent feedback from schools who have experienced their audit has been very positive. The results of this will be received by the Local Authority to help inform future commissioning to support settings on their journey of becoming more inclusive. All evaluations are due to take place this term and completed by the end of January.

A training programme of dates has launched and will continue to be added to. A focus this year is on the writing of SMART targets, so that progress becomes easier to measure on SEND support and Education Health and Care Plans. SENCOs and Designated Children Looked After Teachers will also receive a copy of a text to support them to deliver training on writing SMART targets in their own setting.

This will be a common approach to training over the two year project, to ensure that those attending any of the training provided, have the tools to cascade it effectively into their own setting, thus creating sustainability in areas of the SEND partnership.

Within the data systems workstream, the additional capacity has been supporting a range of activity around the procurement of a new system, to facilitate the requirements across the SEND partnership. This is alongside generating a manual data dashboard that can be updated quarterly, and part of the SEND inspection readiness.

1.5 Outreach targeted support

Springboard outreach team launched on 1st September. This team has been funded using some Early Years Inclusion Fund and High needs block for one academic year. This team will target 30 children aged up to 7 years old with either an EHCP in place, or a request for Early Years Inclusion funding. The aim of the team is to model strategies to support children in the setting alongside existing staff who work with the child. The team will provide resources to the setting, some which can be kept, and some which are borrowed in a 'try before you buy' approach. Referrals are being managed by the Early Years Lead and SEND

services manager to ensure that those children who are potentially on the cusp of needing specialist provision, may be able to remain in mainstream alongside their peers in their locality to continue to access appropriate education. This approach to support is being carefully monitored to identify if this is an appropriate support mechanism to take forwards after this academic year.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 The timeline around education moving onto a new management information system, has been delayed and will no longer be within the timescales of the DBV project. This is outside of education officers control, and will impact on a longer term sustainable data dashboard before the end of the DBV project.
- 2.2 Speech and language additional capacity has been a challenge to mobilise and contract. Escalation through Children's leadership, SEND exec and colleagues in health continues to take place to ensure that we are able to recruit to and mobilise this part of the project. This is not in place for 1st September as planned and therefore there is slippage in the support being available to support with addressing the current waiting list and delivering training.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The positive benefit to the Council's reputation will be the continued availability of sufficient and suitable pupil places for the children and young people with SEND with EHCP's of the Borough within their own locality in fit for purpose educational places.
- 3.2 The local offer page provides a communication page specifically for SEND for parents, professionals and other stakeholders. There is a dedicated Delivering Better Value in SEND page, which is regularly updated with how plans are progressing. There is also information shared on these pages regarding the development of the new provisions as well. Regular updates on the SEND agenda are provided to headteachers, SENCOs and Early Years settings through their regular forums, where feedback is consistently sought on priority areas and topics too.
- 3.3 Parent Carer forum meet regularly with LA and health officers, where these topics are shared and discussed with representatives from the forum to feedback to their wider membership.
- 3.4 Each term, the Head of SEND and Inclusion meets with SENDIASS workers to provide updates on pertinent and strategic developments, to ensure that they are able to effectively signpost and support the families that they work with.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The free school build is being funded through the Department for Education programme, with a small amount of remedial work required to be undertaken by the Local Authority on the identified land.
- 4.2 The resource specialist provisions are funded by the High Needs Capital Grant funding which the Local Authority have received from the Department for

Education over the last two financial years.

4.3 Revenue funding for the free school, and resource specialist provisions will be funded through the High Needs Block, but will replace (in part) the funding already committed to the commissioning of Independent non-maintained special schools and bespoke packages of education.

4.4 The agreed action plan for Delivering Better Value in SEND, is funded through the £1million grant funding from the Department for Education.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The programmes of work listed above are designed to improve outcomes for children with SEND in North East Lincolnshire by increasing the range and type of education provision available as well as improving access to services.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Local Authority are committed to building wherever possible carbon neutral schools and provision, to also reducing transport costs to reduce environmental impacts of transporting children and young people out of the area.

7. MONITORING COMMENTS

7.1 In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). The SENDAP strategy is scheduled to go to cabinet in February 24, along with the SEND Joint commissioning strategy. As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

All wards affected as children with SEND live and attend schools across place NEL.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme \(dbvinsend.com\)](http://dbvinsend.com)

[NELC SEND Local Offer | DBV in our area - NELC SEND Local Offer \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](http://nelincs.gov.uk)

10. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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