

## CABINET

<b>DATE</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2025
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Councillor Margaret Cracknell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Ann-Marie Matson, Director of Children's Services
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Approval to recommission Dedicated Outreach Support Service and Outreach Provision for Children with Autism or Communication and Interaction Needs, undertake procurement exercise and enter into contracts
<b>STATUS</b>	Open
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF NO</b>	CB 02/25/07

### CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The provision of high-quality Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and inclusive services which are sustainable in North East Lincolnshire directly supports the Council's aims, Stronger Economy and Stronger Community. These are key to ensure residents, especially children, young people and their parents/carers in the Borough, experience sustainable communities, benefiting from local services which meet identified needs.

The Council has developed an Outcomes Framework which sets out five high level outcomes that the Council and its partners aspire to deliver to ensure prosperity and wellbeing for residents of North East Lincolnshire. The provision of staff skill development and support in local schools and for children, young people who have Autism or Communication Interaction Needs and their families will contribute towards achieving these outcomes, i.e. all people in North East Lincolnshire will:

- fulfil their potential through skills and learning
- benefit from sustainable communities,
- enjoy good health and wellbeing, and
- help to grow our strong economy.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report seeks approval to recommission Dedicated neurodiversity Outreach Support Service to include information, advice, guidance and training, as well as a targeted outreach Provision for Children with neurodiverse needs including Autism and Communication and Interaction Needs, undertake a procurement exercise and enter into contracts. These support delivery of more sustainable SEND system. Following successful piloting of these services via the Delivering Better Value Grant funded programme, the Local Authority will be able to continue commissioning of a much needed service and training for professionals, children and their parents/carers and supporting children in their education settings. As identified in NEL SENDAP the recommissioning will contribute to SEND services enabling provision of the right support at the right time in the right place to create a more sustainable system for children and young people with neurodiverse needs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approves the undertaking of a procurement exercise for dedicated outreach support service and outreach provision for children with autism or communication and interaction needs provision as set out in the report.
2. Authorises the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education to commence the above procurement exercise.
3. Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education to award, and take all ancillary actions reasonably arising, including implementation and mobilisation.
4. Authorises the Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to complete and execute all requisite legal documentation arising from the above recommendations.

## **REASONS FOR DECISION**

This decision enables the Council to continue to deliver a dedicated outreach support service and outreach provision for children with autism or communication and interaction needs provision across the borough. This follows evaluation of successful piloting of these services following identified need via the Delivering Better Value in SEND services (DBV) programme.

The current contracts for the commissioned support are due to expire in August 2025.

Without this decision, the Council would not be able to deliver the commissioned support to professionals, and their parents and carers. It also supports strengthening our local services and inclusive culture ensuring sustainable approaches and improved inclusivity in local schools for children and young people.

This provision will also enable the Council, with its partners, to be better prepared for future SENDAP services inspections which without provision to support meeting identified needs could negatively impact on judgement, the impact that would have for the borough and children's outcomes.

## **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

- 1.1 On 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) officially announced that North East Lincolnshire Council had been successfully accepted onto the first wave of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services programme. The Local Authority had been aware of this decision since August 2022 and had already commenced some diagnostic work with the team. The DfE has acknowledged the pressure experienced by local systems in delivering services. The DBV programme aimed to support Local Authorities in delivering services for children and young

people whilst ensuring sustainability. The DBV programme is aimed at the Local Authorities who are projecting a deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), based on 2020-21 data. The DBV programme activity contributes to the delivery of the Councils Education and Inclusion strategy (2022) providing additional funding to provide capacity and accelerate activity.

- 1.2 The DBV programme has enabled key NELC officers, following a performance diagnostic to identify areas of strength and improvement for NELC local delivery. Improvement areas identified at the end of the programme included improvement of culture of inclusion in mainstream settings.
- 1.3 Through this collaborative programme NELC undertook consultation on development of the DBV plan through workshops and attending different meetings. Key partner stakeholders consulted included Trusts, Head teachers, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO's), parent and children forum representatives, key council officers, health and SEND services. There was a clear need to provide dedicated support in education settings for professionals, identified children and their carers to support children with autism or communication and interaction needs in mainstream settings as part of the graduated response approach. Alongside this a comprehensive training and Continuous Professional Development offer and a dedicated outreach support service that provided advice and guidance to support professionals.
- 1.4 Two services have been successfully piloted via the DBV funded programme, delivered by one of our special schools: Cambridge Park Academy part of the Humber Education Trust. Impact reports and evaluations undertaken have evidenced positive impacts reported by professionals, parents and carers.
- 1.5 DBV grant funding comes to an end in 2025/2026, the continuation of these services would be met through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block to enable a seamless transition when contracts come to an end in August 2025.
- 1.6 The dedicated service provides direct support in education settings for up to 30 children, alongside a NEL wide training offer for professionals and parents/carers and a dedicated helpline to provide advice and guidance.
- 1.7 There remains a rise in demand and complexity, with children and young people with autism and communication and interaction needs being one of the highest identified areas of need for children with SEND in NEL. This continues to impact on the overall capacity of professionals in mainstream education settings and parents/carers to meet the development needs of children and the profile of need.
- 1.8 The Council want to understand better the current market ideas. A preliminary market engagement exercise is being completed during February 2025 and the analysis of responses will inform further specification development.
- 1.9 The future contract would potentially be minimum of 3 years at value of 186,000 per year, potentially split into two lots, with option to extend for one year (extension is subject to further funding being agreed).

- 1.10 The DBV programme activity and services commissioned post DBV as a result of success of the piloting of these services, support continued improvement of inclusive services for children, young people and their families locally to improve outcomes for those who require additional support.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2.1 A risk exists in not being able to deliver improvement activities contributing to successful delivery of the SENDAP and Education and Inclusion strategies, improving outcomes for some of our most vulnerable children with complex needs in the borough.
- 2.2 Improving outcomes for children and young people is a priority and risks these will not be improved or at an acceptable rate.
- 2.3 If children are unable to be supported in mainstream settings there is significant risk further demands will be placed on more costly specialist placements and services, some of which will be out of borough due to sufficiency of specialist places. This places further financial strain on Council budgets and the Dedicated Schools Grant, and additional risks to children who are not educated in their own NEL community including increased safeguarding risks.
- 2.4 There are significant reputational risks as by not delivering these services could significantly impact the attainment, health and wellbeing of children and young people who require these SEND services. The Council also risks further reputational damage with local partners and stakeholders such as schools, academies, parents, carers children and young people, and key partners, if provision is not available.

## **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 Do nothing. This option has not been recommended as it would not improve inclusion in mainstream settings, outcomes for children and young people with autism or communication and interaction needs. It would also leave NELC and its partners at risk of a poor future SEND inspection.
- 3.2 Only deliver some of the functions described. This option is not recommended as need has been identified for all functions described.

## **4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 There are potential positive reputational implications for the Council resulting from the decision to recommission these services. The services are part of the transformation work being undertaken for SENDAP services. This will increase parental and professional confidence in the ability of professionals to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, which without the services would negatively hinder progress in this area.

- 4.2 A communications plan will be developed and agreed with the Council's communication service to ensure the services are widely communicated such as via the Councils Local Offer, Headteachers and Parent Carer Forum meetings.

## **5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 The costs associated with recommissioning and delivery of these services for 3 years will be funded through the DSG high needs block.
- 5.2 Whilst this will put further pressure on the high needs block, the approximate cost per child to receive support via Springboard is £3,166. If that child had required a place in a special school, this would have incurred an additional cost per year of attending of at least £3,500. A child moving into specialist setting at Year 1 and remaining there until aged 19 would therefore have cost an additional £66,500 per child.

## **6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

Children and young people with neurodiverse conditions and needs require SEND services across all geographical areas of the local authority who are aged 0 to 16 years will benefit from services delivered.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct climate change and environmental implications for the Council resulting from the decision to recommission services. However, improvements in our SEND support and inclusion offer we would expect to reduce the need for some specialist education places and therefore there could be a reduction in school transport being used, as children are able to remain in their local mainstream setting supported by outreach services.

## **8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY**

At the time of writing, it is intended that the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel will be consulted in advance.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The costs associated with the recommissioning of this service will be met through the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block. Whilst this will increase the overspend on the high needs block, the service proposed is more cost effective than alternative higher cost solutions.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Preliminary Market Consultation and the procurement exercise are governed by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The Preliminary Market Consultation activity will enable the specification to be developed, in line with the appropriate contractual documentation. Such activity enables the seeking or accepting of advice from independent experts, authorities or from market participants providing it does not distort competition nor breach the requirements for non-discrimination and transparency. The contract is the key

governing document through which the resulting relationship will be governed and Legal Services will support the completion of the contractual documentation on award.

10.2 The procurement exercise will be conducted so as to comply with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and supported by relevant officers.

10.3 The delegations sought are consistent with an exercise of this nature.

## **11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct HR implications arising from the contents of this report.

## **12. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

All wards potentially would be affected by the decision to recommission these services as activity is focussed on all local mainstream settings and professionals, parents/carers and children across the borough.

## **13. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Education and Inclusion Strategy

[Education-and-Inclusion-Strategy-2022-2025.pdf \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](#)

SEND Alternative Provision strategies

[NELC SEND Local Offer | Our vision and key documents \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](#)

[Delivering Better Value Cabinet Decision](#)

## **14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

Jennifer Steel, Service Director Education, Inclusion and Integration 07557 812996

Rebecca Taylor, Head of SEND and Inclusion, 07880462414

**COUNCILLOR MARGARET CRACKNELL**  
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION**

## Appendix DBV workstream plans

### ● Data visibility and improvement cycles – Workstream Summary



#### Objective and Approach

Development of an interactive data dashboard of current and projected data which will inform practice and decision making to improve performance and provide support earlier. The workstream is also expecting to improve inclusivity and to keep children in mainstream setting via an earlier identification of needs.

Programme Team	Stakeholders	Interdependencies	Enablers
<b>Senior Accountable Officer</b> – Sally Jack <b>Project Lead</b> – <b>Delivery Team</b> <b>SEND services</b> <b>Data team</b> <b>BIT team</b> <b>SEND advisors</b> – Anne	<b>Impacted by change:</b> <b>SEND services team</b> <b>Data team</b> <b>BIT team</b> <b>SEND Advisor</b>  <b>Milestone Events</b> 1 – Setup a programme governance and organise programme kick – off 2 – Define the role profile for the programme team 3 – Creation of a communication plan towards all the stakeholders impacted by the change 4 – Baseline of the performance and definition of the impact tracking mechanism 5 – LA accept the grant 6 – Recruitment of the resources 7 – Design phase • 4.1 – Research about data insights and best practices from other local authorities • 4.1 – Audit of the current situation (as is position) • 4.2 – Design the target data dashboard (operational requirements translated into technical requirements) • 4.3 – Delivery of a first version of the dashboards • 4.4 – Design of the improvement cycles and performance framework (workflow, governance, quality assurance) 5 – Pilot phase: Pilot a priority data set e.g. EHCP timeliness first before full launch to ensure process/systems work as planned. 6 – Roll – out: The role out approach will be defined during the design phase. 7 – Sustain	<b>Working alongside the procurement and implementation of a new system</b>	<b>Governance</b> G2 <b>Digital Capability</b> D1 <b>Leadership</b> L2 <b>Capacity</b> Ca2 <b>Capability</b> Cb2
Likely Measures	Risks		
<b>Top-level</b> - # CYP starting EHCPs - Turn around time to issue an EHCP - # CYP starting specialist placement - Reduction in High Needs spend - #EHCP ceased every year	• Delays in delivery that will impact our readiness on the new inspection framework • Impact on not being able to proactively allocate resource to priority areas.		

### ● Culture of inclusion in mainstream settings – Workstream Summary



#### Objective and Approach

The education system has a culture of shared responsibility and accountability that ensures everyone supporting a child or young person strives towards their most inclusive and aspirational outcome. We will do this by embedding the Education and inclusion strategy, supporting all education settings in workforce development opportunities and adding capacity to teams and services where appropriate.

Programme Team	Stakeholders	Interdependencies	Enablers
<b>Senior Accountable Officer</b> – Sally Jack <b>Project Lead</b> – Rebecca Taylor <b>Delivery Team</b> <b>SEND services (EP, Specialist teachers, EHCP Co-ordinators)</b> <b>Health representatives (where appropriate)</b> <b>School representatives</b> <b>Parent Carer Forum representatives</b> <b>Local Offer Co-ordinator</b> – Lauren Thompson <b>Data Lead</b> – Linda Manley <b>Strategic special projects lead</b> – Helen Norris <b>People and Culture representative</b> – Jonathan Sturgeon	<b>Impacted by change:</b> <b>Schools Forum</b> <b>SEND team</b> <b>Parent Carer forum</b> <b>School representatives</b> <b>Health representative</b> <b>Specialist settings</b>  <b>Milestone Events</b> 1 – Setup a programme governance and organise programme kick – off 2 – Creation of a communication plan towards all the stakeholders impacted by the change 3 – Workshop: 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2023 4 – Baseline of the performance and definition of the impact tracking mechanism 5 – LA accept the grant March 2023 6 – Recruitment of the resources commences March 2023 7 – Design phase April – August • 4.1 – Design implementation plan • 4.2 – Seek further feedback from stakeholder group • 4.3 – Commission/Procure external agencies and organisations as required • 4.4 – Design of the improvement cycles and performance framework (workflow, governance, quality assurance) 5 – Roll – out: The role out approach will be defined during the design phase including sequencing of schools. 6 – Evaluation of programmes/development activity at the end of year 1 and tweak where relevant for year 2. 7 – Sustain	<b>Data development workstream</b> <b>Speech and Language strategic steering group.</b> <b>SEND specialist school places sufficiency.</b> <b>SEND strategy refresh workstream.</b> <b>Early Years Inclusion Fund working group.</b> <b>Start for Life programme</b>	<b>Governance</b> G2 <b>Digital Capability</b> D1 <b>Leadership</b> L2 <b>Capacity</b> Ca2 <b>Capability</b> Cb2
Likely Measures	Risks		
<b>Top-level</b> - # CYP starting EHCPs - Turn around time to issue an EHCP - # CYP starting specialist placement - Reduction in High Needs spend - #EHCP ceased every year - #CYP at SEN support receiving a suspension	• Delays in delivery is likely to put further pressure on existing teams, services and provision. • Schools not engaging with the proposal and offer, resulting in inconsistent approaches to inclusion. • Data risk if workstream not implemented that impact data cannot be gathered and used effectively.		