



Committee and Date

Cabinet  
20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

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Item

**20**

Public

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) STRATEGY**

### **Responsible Officer**

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### **1. Summary**

This report seeks Cabinet approval for the development of a range of provisions to meet the needs of some children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream schools via a 'spend to save' initiative.

This development will see a series of local, specialist hubs located within mainstream schools. Initially, one hub is to be open by September 2014 specifically for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This will be followed by further, similar provisions located around the County over the following two years.

This will improve localised, specialist resources for young people enabling some children to remain with their families in Shropshire, and will enable the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to be used more efficiently. It is likely to lead to non-residential solutions for young people as they move into adult services.

### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) Support the proposed strategy in order to meet one of the key objectives of the *Shropshire Children and Young People's Strategy 2012*; that the Council should 'enhance local provision and develop mainstream support including the development of specialist hubs'.
- (2) Approve the creation of local, specialised hubs located on mainstream school sites. This would provide the best solution to allowing some young people with SEN to access suitable, specialist provision, within, or close to, their home community in the most cost-effective manner.
- (3) Agree that such a provision should be managed through a specialist provider (independent or maintained).

## REPORT

### 3. Background

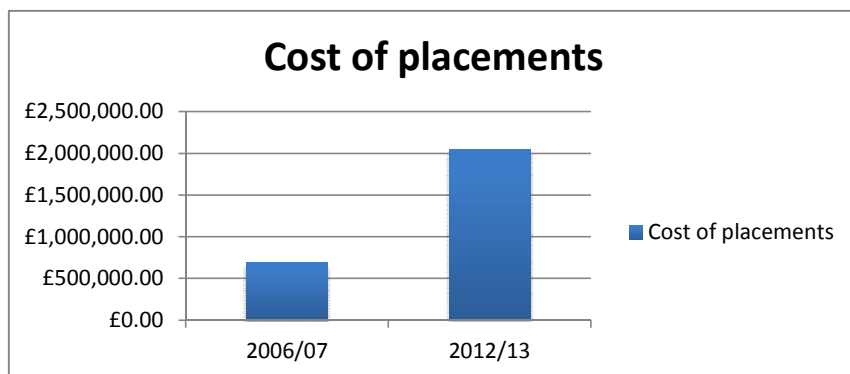
- 3.1 Nationally, the number of children and young people identified with SEN is increasing year on year. There are approximately 2 million children and young people with SEN in England (around 16.5% of all those aged under 16). In Shropshire there are approximately 7,287 young people with SEN (around 22% of all those aged under 16).
- 3.2 ASD is the area of SEN with the greatest increase in numbers, with a 61% increase in diagnosis nationally between 2005 and 2010<sup>1</sup>. In 2006 there were 107 young people in Shropshire with statements of SEN with ASD as a primary need. As of January 2013 in Shropshire there are 298 young people up to school Year 11 whose primary or secondary need is ASD. This is of the statutory school age population of around 32,500.
- 3.3 According to the Audit Commission's 2007 report *Out of Authority Placements for Special Education Needs*, over 11,000 pupils with a statement of SEN are placed in out of authority special schools in England and Wales. Of these placements, the majority are children and young people with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) or with ASD.
- 3.4 Of the 298 Shropshire students with ASD, 27 attend specialist, non-maintained provision, the rest attend mainstream schools. Although this appears only a small number in out-county provision, these placements are very expensive, as highlighted in the table below.

	Number of students with statements of SEN attending out-county placements	Number of students with statements of SEN relating to ASD	Average cost of an out-county placement for ASD	Total cost per annum (approx.)
2006/07	40	12	£57,387	£688,644
<b>2012/13</b>	56	<b>27</b>	<b>£75,928</b>	<b>£2,050,056</b>

- 3.5 Whilst the number of placements in out of authority schools is rising, the cost of these placements is also increasing rapidly. Costs for sending young people to out of authority special schools have increased by 79% since 2000/01<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.6 Out of authority placements for those with ASD needs in Shropshire are amongst the highest cost arrangements. The graph below indicates the increase in expenditure on out-county placements.

<sup>1</sup> DfE. (2011). Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability. [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Audit Commission. (2007). Out of Authority placements for Special Education Needs. [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)



3.7 Research indicates that Shropshire has considerably less specialist provision for ASD than its statistical neighbours (see Appendix A). Whilst Severndale, one of Shropshire's two LA maintained special schools, does have provision for young people with ASD, these pupils also have complex and severe learning difficulties. There is no LA specialist provision for pupils with ASD whose cognitive ability falls within the average/above average range.

3.8 Although students with ASD and other SEN are often placed in out of authority provision, many more students continue to struggle in mainstream schools and would benefit from increased and more specialised resources in their local areas. Nationally, the government is in support of such strategies that improve localised provision<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4. Why ASD provision?

4.1 Although it is recognised that there has been an increase in the number of those diagnosed with all types of SEN, it is ASD that has witnessed the biggest growth (both nationally and locally). See 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.

4.2 Whilst Shropshire has specialist provision for those with Behavioural and Emotional Spectrum Difficulties (BESD) via maintained, specialist schools (Woodlands and Severndale), in relation to ASD, one of the largest areas of SEN need, there are identifiable gaps in provision in Shropshire.

4.3 Developing in-county, provision would therefore reduce reliance upon more expensive, out-county school placements. The total cost of provision for a small number of young people in independent school places is disproportionately high in comparison to the majority of pupils placed in mainstream provision. An average placement for a day pupil with ASD needs is £75,928, but individual placement costs can exceed £90,000 p.a. This would not remove the need for some young people to continue to access specialist residential provision.

4.4 Once the costs of 3 hubs, including staff costs and running costs have been considered, a placement for a child at a hub provision is estimated to be approximately £14,500 p.a. This excludes capital set up costs.

4.5 Developing in-county provision will significantly benefit those pupils with ASD who currently attend mainstream provision. It is likely that providing more

<sup>3</sup> DfE. 2012. Draft legislation on the reform of provision for children and young people with SEN. [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

specialised support at secondary schools will prevent some of Shropshire's more vulnerable learners needing to attend independent placements in the future reducing strain on adult social care.

- 4.6 It is envisaged that these hub resources will help to develop a continuum of seamless support that meets the needs of Shropshire's children and young people, whilst simultaneously providing an education that is best value for money and that facilitates the education of young people within their own community. This therefore supports the vision described in Shropshire's *Children and Young People's Strategy 2012* of 'moving towards more localised services'.

## 5. Strategy

- 5.1 It is suggested that in order to address the needs of a growing number of learners with ASD, and to reduce the expenditure on out-county placements, Shropshire must develop in-county provision.
- 5.2 The intention is to provide accommodation that is appropriate to the pupils' needs, fit for purpose and geographically located so that, as far as possible, pupils can access local provision (see Appendix B). This means that more young people with ASD or other SEN are not removed from their local communities: the very communities many will return to at the end of their school career.
- 5.3 A "hub" is an enhanced resource base, co-located on an existing mainstream site, in which pupils receive specialist teaching. It is our intention that the SEN hub will be an enhanced resource base in which students with special education needs are able to access specialist teaching and a more responsive and tailored curriculum in order to meet their particular needs. The hub will be located upon a mainstream site, utilising many of the site's existing resources. It is intended that through the hub's location, students will also be able to access mainstream teaching where this is suitable. The design of the hub would be based upon other successful models of UK local authority specialist provision. A hub developed for use by pupils with ASD would have particular design requirements in order to create the quiet, calm and low distraction environment that is conducive to meeting the young people's specialist needs. All these factors will be considered when developing our hubs'.
- 5.4 Hubs will be located on existing school sites making use of many of the schools' resources and existing capacity. This would encourage cohesion and a sense of affiliation and community within the school allowing students to receive specialist input, whilst also accessing mainstream provision in an appropriately supported way, as well as proving most cost-effective by reducing the need for duplication of site resources. Provision will be developed by refurbishing existing school buildings.
- 5.4 Secondary school sites are likely to be chosen as the most suitable locations for the provision in order to address the difficulties that are traditionally associated with the transition period from Year 6 to Year 7. In many cases the needs of those with ASD often can be more readily met in primary schools and as such, their difficulties are less apparent until the student moves to secondary school.
- 5.5 Hubs will allow those with ASD access to specialist provision and at the same time access to mainstream schooling where appropriate. This gives flexibility to

children and young people ensuring that their differing needs are met and that they are able to achieve their full potential within a local authority maintained provision.

- 5.6 In consultation with schools, governors and other agencies a decision will be made as to the most suitable location for the first provision. Further provisions over the following two years will be developed following additional consultation.
- 5.7 It is the recommendation of the officers from the SEN strategy group that the hubs be overseen and managed by a specialist provider (independent or maintained).
- 5.8 It is recommended that this strategy is implemented as soon as possible so as to maximise the potential to reduce spending on out of county placements. There is evidence of genuine need for this provision within the county. Delaying implementation of the strategy would result in increased spending on out-county resources without any return of investment to Shropshire or the potential for any future savings.
- 5.9 The proposed timeline for the strategy is as follows:

September 2014 - Opening of first hub  
(This is subject to consultations, tendering and commissioning processes).

Further hubs will follow.

## **6. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 6.1 An EINA has been undertaken. This is about enhancing opportunities for children and families, allowing some children to remain in Shropshire to receive education. Children and young people who require specialist residential provision would be able to access it.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 This strategy is a 'spend to save' initiative.
- 7.2 For all students, funding ultimately comes from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). When students attend out-county provision, a proportion of the DSG goes out with that child to their placement. With the rising cost of out-county placements, this means a greater proportion of the DSG is taken out of the county each year. Educating these young people within maintained provision ensures that the DSG fund stays within Shropshire schools, and as such is not removed from the Shropshire education system. This will benefit mainstream schools.
- 7.3 Until the exact hub locations have been decided it is difficult to predict the financial implications of developing the provisions.
- 7.4 The cost in setting up and running the hubs will in the long-term be addressed by reduced expenditure on independent, out-county placements.

- 7.5 In the short-term, and for initial development, there is a dedicated capital resource of £850,000 available. This is funding that is ringfenced to school provision in order to meet the needs of young people with SEN in the county.
- 7.6 Initial costs: It is estimated that refurbishment of existing buildings will cost in the region of £1500 per m<sup>2</sup> (excluding external works), fees would be at 12.5% and loose furniture and equipment would cost in the region of £45,000 per hub. Based on a hub size of 160m<sup>2</sup>, refurbishment costs would be around £270,000.
- 7.7 Staffing costs (all figures are estimates):  
£312,000 per hub
- Utility costs:  
Based on 160m<sup>2</sup> - £6,000
- Equipment costs:  
Educational equipment costs (for 24 pupils) - £24,000.
- Therefore, total costs for a pupil placement (once three hubs are established) would be approximately £14,500 p.a. (excluding transport costs).
- 7.8 Using these estimates a placement in hub provision would be approximately £61,500 less expensive per pupil, per year than the average cost of an out-county placement.
- 7.9 After initial expenditure upon setting up the hubs, much of the revenue costs will be addressed by reduced spending on out-county placements for Shropshire children and young people (see Appendix C for estimated individual case study savings and financial predictions).

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

DfE. (2011). Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability. Shropshire Council. (2012) Shropshire Children and Young People's Strategy 2012

Audit Commission. (2007). Out of Authority placements for Special Education Needs. DfE. 2012. Draft legislation on the reform of provision for children and young people with SEN.

Shropshire Council. (2011). Council Plan 2011-13.

EINA

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cecilia Motley**

**Local Member All Members**

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Comparisons with statistical neighbours

Appendix B – Map of Shropshire ASD need

Appendix C – Individual case study savings and financial predictions