

Specialist Provision Strategic Review and Development Plan 2018-22

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Executive Summary

In October 2017 Shropshire Council commissioned a comprehensive review of its high needs provision and this **Specialist Provision Strategic Review and Development Plan** sets out the findings and presents recommendations and a rationale as to how additional capital funding available from the Department for Education should be invested.

Sections 2 & 3 sets out Shropshire’s strategic intentions and the local context including a description of the current specialist provision available for learners across all age ranges 0-25.

Section 4 summarises the main findings of Shropshire’s SEND Needs Analysis 2018, highlighting a number of areas where it is significantly adrift of statistical norms. One of the key areas of difference is the relatively very low proportion of learners attending special schools and specialist provision. The provision that does exist is particularly concentrated around Shrewsbury leaving large areas with limited access to services. This factor, in tandem with the comparatively sparse population spread across a very large geographical area, means that Shropshire’s mainstream schools are meeting the needs of a higher number of learners with complex needs than is the case in other areas. Schools interviewed during the course of the review confirm that there are acute pressures in meeting the needs of these complex learners exacerbated by the current challenging financial context.

The report highlights that there are particular gaps for learners who are academically able to access some aspects of the nation curriculum but who may struggle with some of the environmental or social aspects of mainstream school life. This analysis strongly suggests that the key priorities should be:

- The development of specialist provision attached to mainstream schools in order to meet the needs of complex learners – particularly those with communication and interaction difficulties - enabling them to be educated closer to home.
- These provisions could be either mainstream school led (known as **Resourced Provision**) or special school led but based on mainstream school sites – known as **Satellite Provision**
- That preparatory work is carried out to develop a bid for a new special school for learners with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs with associated social communication difficulties in readiness for the Department for Education’s expected announcement of a new round of free school funding.

Section 6 details the dialogue and consultation that has taken place with a range of stakeholders between October 2017 and March 2018 including an online survey, and summarises the feedback gathered during this process, which has been largely in favour of the identified priorities and proposals.

The latter section of the report sets out a **Specialist Provision Development Plan for Shropshire**, which recommends proceeding with the implementation of the above priorities in the following locations in year 1 (subject to budget constraints):

- Whittington CofE (Aided) Primary School, Oswestry – 10 place provision for primary aged learners with communication and interaction difficulties
- St Andrew’s CofE Primary School, Nesscliffe – 10 place provision for primary aged learners with communication and interaction difficulties
- Community College, Bishops Castle – 20 place provision for secondary aged learners with communication and interaction difficulties
- Oldbury Wells School, Bridgenorth – 20 place provision for secondary aged learners with communication and interaction difficulties

Further proposals will follow to cover other areas of Shropshire in years 2 & 3.

A range of other recommendations are also made including developing SEN support to provide early intervention for pupils with mental health needs and stimulating the development of high quality independent provision through development of a Market Position Statement.

1. Introduction

The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out a statutory duty for local authorities to keep provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) under review, in order to ensure that the provision reflects and addresses local needs.

On 4 March 2017 the Department for Education (DfE) announced the ‘Special Provision Fund’¹ to support all local authorities in England to develop their provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This fund provides capital investment in recognition of the growing demand for specialist provision across the country. Local authorities can invest in developing additional high needs places and/or improve existing facilities for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans in mainstream and special schools, nurseries, colleges and other provision.

Shropshire has a capital allocation of **£500k** ‘Special Provision Fund’ between 2018-21 (£166,667 p.a.); this is provided *in addition to* the basic need capital funding that local authorities receive to provide new pupil places.

In October 2017 Shropshire Council commissioned a comprehensive review of its high needs provision and this **Specialist Provision Strategic Review and Development Plan** sets out the findings and presents recommendations and a rationale as to how capital investment should be prioritised. The report is underpinned and informed by **Shropshire’s Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Needs Assessment 2018**, which is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Shropshire’s Strategic Intentions

Our vision sees Shropshire children and young people with SEND that are healthy, happy and safe, and able to achieve their full potential with support from a strong partnership between families, the voluntary sector and service providers and commissioners.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-provision-capital-funding-for-pupils-with-ehc-plans>

What outcomes are we seeking?

Shropshire Council's overall aim is to improve outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) by promoting high aspirations and expectations. Children and young people with SEND and their families will feel happier, healthier, safer, more valued, more accepted, and more responsible for their actions.

This will mean that children and young people with SEND living in Shropshire

- are safe and well looked after in a supportive environment
- are resilient with good emotional wellbeing
- are positively engaged in their community
- are as healthy as they can be and see health inequalities reduced
- see any achievement gap narrowed and are successful in achieving their goals
- are prepared for independence and work in their adult lives

In order to achieve this, we will take a strategic approach to the commissioning and coordination of services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

Shropshire is an inclusive authority and works to ensure that, where possible, all children and young people will be able to attend their local mainstream school. Where this is not possible, Shropshire Council's aim is that the majority of children who require specialist provision will be able to access an appropriate school within a 30-minute commute.

Regardless of where children receive their education it is essential that all children and young people with SEN will access an appropriate curriculum.

3. Local Context

i. Population and Geography

Shropshire is England's largest inland county, covering almost 3,500 square kilometres. Most of its population and services are centred on the larger urban areas such as Shrewsbury and Oswestry, with other market towns also concentrated in the north. South Shropshire is more rural and its population more thinly spread.

In the coming years the 0-25's population is set to remain relatively stable, but housing development in some areas may create sufficiency issues for mainstream school places.

Because of its size and relative rurality, access to services is the single most significant challenge for Shropshire's specialist provision, impacting on access to specialist staff and expertise, transport costs, as well as the sustainability and resilience of provision.

ii. Specialist Provision and Support

A more detailed profile of Shropshire’s specialist provision and support can be found in **Appendix 1 – Shropshire’s SEND Needs Assessment**, but the key headlines from this analysis are summarised below.

a. Pre-School Provision

There is growing demand for pre-school specialist support, arising from improved early identification and assessment of needs through Multi-Disciplinary Assessments (MDA). Whilst Shropshire commissions 40 places in Severndale specialist nursery to meet the needs of the pre-school children with the highest levels of need, the council has also adopted a policy of increasing access to appropriate support at a local level through the recruitment and development of a ‘Preferred Providers’ list with 26 providers across the area meeting the criteria of being capable of providing an inclusive service and meeting the needs of children with additional needs. This initiative will continue to be supported to recruit and support more providers in the coming years.

b. State-funded Special Schools & Academies

Shropshire has two state-funded special schools, a flexible PRU/medical school, and a specialist resource ‘Hub’ attached to a mainstream secondary academy. The SEND Needs Assessment identifies that Shropshire has comparatively sparse specialist provision and as a result makes significant use of special schools in neighbouring authorities. To some degree this is an inevitable feature given the size of the area covered, but the assessment acknowledges that the distances some children and young people are forced to travel to access suitable provision could be addressed through the development of a wider range of provision at a local level.

The needs assessment also identified gaps in particular categories of provision, with very limited specialist provision for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders despite this being the fastest growing category of need nationally and locally. There are well established models of practice proving that many of these learners, with the right support, are cognitively able to access the mainstream curriculum.

c. Hub Provision

In February 2013 Shropshire Council approved the development of “hub” provision to meet the special educational needs of children and young people in Shropshire. The focus was on enabling more access to suitable, cost effective specialist provision within, or close to their home community, for some children whose prime area of need is Social Interaction and Communication and who may have a diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Condition.

This decision led to the development of the Kettlemere Hub, which was designed as a flagship provision based within and led by Lakelands Academy in Ellesmere. Difficulties in the early stages of development and the lack of a mutually agreed contract between the Local Authority and the Academy led to a breakdown in the relationship and subsequently

to the suspension of new placements in the setting. Although this situation has recently been resolved with the signing of a new contractual agreement and new placements commencing in 2018, the situation led to the stalling of new Hub developments across the LA. Although both Woodlands and TMBSS Schools have continued to develop satellite bases, these developments have not progressed as swiftly as was envisaged back in 2013 and there are remaining gaps in provision across Shropshire.

d. Independent Provision

Shropshire has 5.3% of learners with EHC Plans attending independent specialist provision which is in keeping with national and statistical neighbour averages. Placement numbers in the independent sector have been increasing over recent years and whilst this is not currently an urgent cause for concern this trend will need to be monitored as failure to keep pace with growing numbers of learners with ASC and SEMH needs could see these numbers increasing.

There are significant numbers attending Access School based in Shropshire for pupils with SEMH needs and Bettws Lifehouse based in Powys, for learners with ASC and SEMH; both of these are small, local, independent specialist schools with good reputations. Currently these settings are providing a valuable service to Shropshire local authority given the lack of such provision elsewhere, but given the growth in ASC and SEMH needs, there is an acute risk of over-reliance on independent provision that could, if unchecked, ultimately prove to be unsustainable.

e. Post-16 Provision for learners with SEND

Shropshire benefits from a range of specialist support and provision for post-16 learners (see Appendix 1 for details). Although there are identified gaps in access to employment and supported internships, the needs assessment suggests that Shropshire has a strong foundation of provision to build upon. This age range will benefit from the recent development of Shropshire's Preparation for Adulthood Pathway and a new Transitions Team within Shropshire's SEND Service.

f. Specialist Support

It is noteworthy that although there are a range of support services available, there is no centralised specialist teaching service. This gap in the market is addressed through outreach support provided by special schools as well as independent outreach services and services located within the neighbouring authority of Telford and Wrekin. All of these services can be commissioned directly by Shropshire schools. Such collaborative working is identified as a strength that should be built upon in developing a wider range of provision.

iii. Mapping Shropshire's High Needs Learners

Maps have been produced to demonstrate the geographical spread of the home locations of Shropshire's special school cohort; these are included in Shropshire's SEN Needs Assessment (Appendix 1 - pp34-36).

The maps illustrate the concentration of SEND learners around the main populations in Shrewsbury and the main towns, namely Oswestry, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Whitchurch, Cleobury Mortimer and Bridgnorth. These also illustrate the huge catchment areas served by the Shropshire's two special schools - Severndale and Woodlands - and the significant distances many learners travel to attend these schools. It should be highlighted that both schools (along with The Tuition, Medical and Behaviour Support Service) have sought to address these geographical challenges through development of a number of 'Hub' sites around the authority, however, these developments remain patchy with significant gaps remaining.

iv. Shropshire's Changing Profile of Need

Analysis by Shropshire's Public Health Intelligence Team in 2014 identified significant growth both in Speech Language & Communication Needs (SLCN) and Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASC). This is accompanied by a widespread trend of increasing complexity of need with increasing numbers of learners where intensive support is likely to be required.

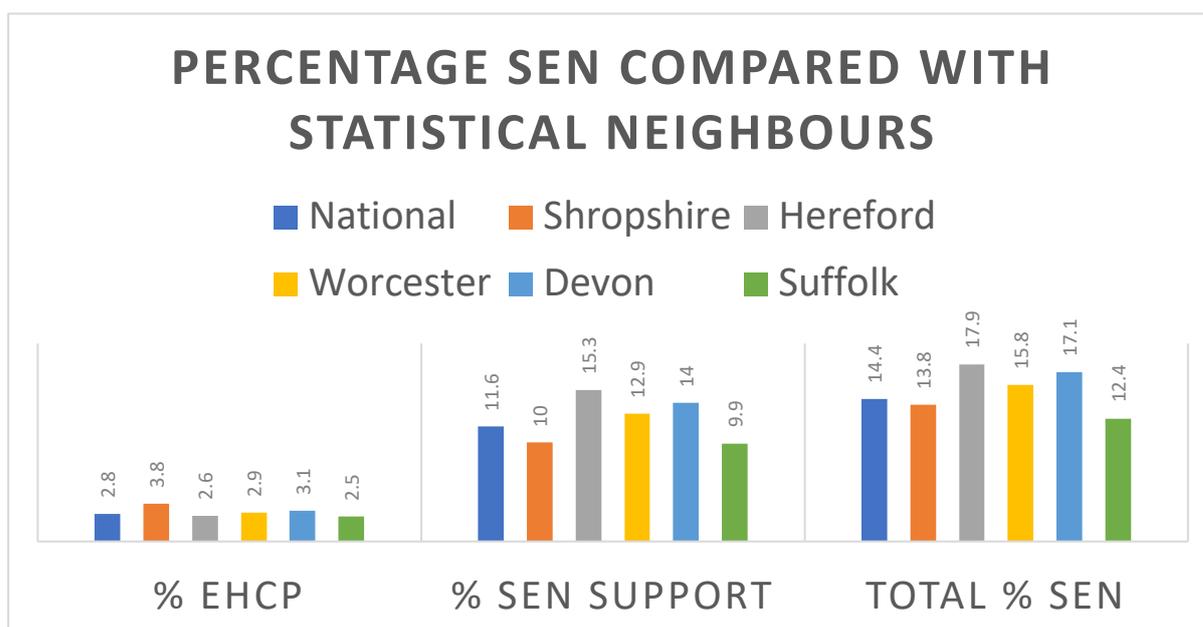
This is reflected in national trends most recently highlighted in a 2017 report by the Council for Disabled Children and the True Colours Trust that explored data around disabled children with complex needs and life-limiting conditions.² Comparing 2016 pupil census data with 2004 figures, the research found that nationally there were now **+48%** more children overall with complex needs and a staggering **+219%** more with ASC being educated in special schools.

² *'Understanding the needs of disabled children with complex needs or life-limiting conditions'* – Council for Disabled Children and True Colours Trust, February 2017: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/understanding-needs-disabled-children-complex-needs-or-life-limiting-conditions>

4. How does Shropshire compare with other areas?

i. Inclusion

Shropshire has a comparatively high proportion of Statements / EHC Plans alongside a comparatively low proportion of SEN Support, which *might* suggest that schools are identifying needs later than in other areas and that where needs are identified there may be an expectation that these are supported through additional high needs funding, (although this implication is not borne out in the analysis below with regards to the very low proportion of learners in Special School).



This imbalance between EHCPs and SEN Support is now being addressed through Shropshire Council's introduction of the Graduated Support Plan, which provides access to high needs funding for learners with SEN but without EHC Plans. Given the very high proportion of small schools in Shropshire, access to this additional funding can only help to ensure schools are better able to meet needs and is expected to result in the proportion of learners at SEN Support increase and the proportion of pupils with EHC Plans to decrease to a level closer to comparators.

Countering any indication that Shropshire's schools are *not* being inclusive is the fact that there is a relatively *very* low proportion of placements in special schools or specialist provision (see **Table 1** below). This demonstrates that mainstream schools must be supporting relatively high-level needs, which is reinforced by comments made by every school interviewed during this review process of a strong sense of association and connection between Shropshire's schools and the communities they serve. In this context, it is worth highlighting that Shropshire is comparatively poorly funded for SEN and it may be that school's limited resources have been dedicated to higher needs learners at the expense of those with lower levels of need.

Table 1. Placement of pupils with statements/EHC plans – January 2017

	TOTAL CHILDREN WITH A STATEMENT/EHC PLAN	MAINSTREAM PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS		STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS, ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS		SPECIAL AND STATE-FUNDED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS – PUPILS PLACED IN SEN UNITS OR RESOURCED PROVISION	
		NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
England	242,184	116,257	48.0%	109,861	45.4%	16,129	6.7%
W. Midlands (excl. Shropshire)	26,462	10,160	38.4%	14,664	55.4%	1,393	5.3%
Statistical neighbours	21,819	11,379	52.2%	8,275	37.9%	1,224	5.6%
Shropshire	1,577	916	58.1%	448	28.4%	28	1.8%

Source: DfE – Special educational needs in England: January 2017

ii. Placement Comparisons

The relatively low level of placements in special school and specialist provision is particularly notable. Based on **Table 1** above:

- If Shropshire had the same proportion of placements as statistical neighbour averages this would represent an **additional 150 pupils in special schools plus an additional 60 pupils in designated specialist provision.**
- If Shropshire had the same proportion of placements as the average for West Midlands authorities this would represent an **additional 426 pupils in special schools plus an additional 56 pupils in designated specialist provision.**

iii. National Trends in Specialist Placement

In recent years there have been significant increases in the proportion of learners with EHC Plans placed in special schools (including independent specialist schools). This is being driven by increasing complexity of presenting needs, budget reductions impacting on mainstream schools, as well as the high-stakes, high-pressure culture surrounding accountability for school standards, which could be said to work against inclusion. The resulting trend nationally is that increasing numbers of learners who could (and historically would), with the right support, have attended mainstream school are tending to be placed in special schools.

This is clearly not the case in Shropshire, where, the vast majority of learners with EHC Plans are attending mainstream schools. However, this comes with attendant pressures which are reflected in the increasing proportion of learners (primarily those with ASC and SEMH) being placed in independent and non-maintained specialist settings. This, although not currently an acute cause for concern, if unchecked would become unsustainable; the measures recommended later in this report will mitigate against further increases in demand for placement within the non-maintained and independent specialist sector.

iv. Attainment of pupils with SEN

More detailed analysis of the performance of pupils with SEN is set out in the SEND Needs Analysis (Appendix 1) but this is summarised below:

a. Key Stage 1 Data by SEN

- The data indicates that, in 2017, fewer Shropshire pupils both with and without SEN achieved expected levels of progress in Reading and Writing and Maths compared with national statistics. This was a change from the year before when pupils with EHC Plans or statements were achieving better than national averages.

- In Science more children without SEN and at SEN Support achieved slightly better than national averages, whilst those with EHC Plans achieved marginally worse than average.

b. Key Stage 2 Data by SEN

- Shropshire children with no identified SEN performed marginally better than the national averages in Reading, Writing and Maths.
- Shropshire children with an EHC Plan or Statement performed better than the national averages in Reading, Writing and Maths.
- Shropshire Children with SEN Support performed less well than national averages in Reading, Writing and Maths.

c. Key Stage 4 Data by SEN

- Shropshire children with SEN Support performed slightly worse than their peers nationally in both Attainment 8 and Progress 8.
- Shropshire children with an EHC Plan or Statement performed better than their national peers in both Attainment 8 and Progress 8.

Broadly speaking Shropshire’s pupils with EHC Plans or Statements perform well academically, whereas pupils with SEN Support fare less well. To some degree this may be mitigated by the introduction of the Graduated Support Pathway in September 2017.

v. Percentage of KS4 Pupils with SEN going to or remaining in education and employment

Shropshire is broadly in keeping with national expectations in terms of the proportions of young people at KS4 with SEN remaining in education, although again it is notable that this is above average for learners with EHC Plans or Statements and below average for those with SEN Support.

	Overall sustained education or employment /training destination				
	% of SEN ¹ pupils			% of Non-SEN pupils	Total %
	SEN support	Statement / EHC plan	Total SEN		
ENGLAND	88	90	88	95	94
WEST MIDLANDS	88	90	88	95	94
SHROPSHIRE	86	92	89	95	94

5. Proposals for Development (in priority order)

A number of proposals under four broad headings are presented below to address Shropshire's identified gaps and challenges.

A theme underpinning all of these proposals is to develop and build on **partnerships** particularly between mainstream and specialist providers in developing a comprehensive offer to meet the needs of a wider range of learners closer to their homes.

1) Specialist Resourced Provision for primary aged learners with communication & interaction difficulties (including Autism Spectrum Conditions)

There are growing numbers of learners who struggle to cope in mainstream classrooms due to sensory overload, social difficulties and high levels of anxiety BUT who are able to access the mainstream curriculum. In order to achieve positive outcomes and prepare effectively for adulthood, these learners require smaller group sizes, the right sensory environment and staff who are able to provide identified specialist support. When appropriately supported these learners can significantly benefit from being integrated on a mainstream school site, which provides access to specialist teaching facilities, a broad curriculum and subject-specialist teaching staff as well as maximising opportunities for children and young people to interact with mainstream peers for some aspects of their learning and/or social interaction.

Based on practice in other areas there are established and effective models of provision located on mainstream primary school sites for between 8-12 learners with dedicated staffing and resources. Shropshire has a significant number of schools with falling rolls and spare physical capacity to accommodate such provision without huge capital expenditure. Based on experience elsewhere it is estimated that such provision could be developed with capital expenditure of between £25-100k (subject to many dependencies). Such low-cost provision could be established at a number of locations across the authority, in order to ensure widespread coverage in all areas.

There are two distinct options, either:

a) Mainstream–school led where the learners are on the roll of the host mainstream with the base managed and staffed by the host school

The benefit of this is that it embodies an inclusive ethos and directly engages mainstream schools as key partners in delivery of specialist provision. The challenge can be that such provision may (particularly in the crucial early stages) be very fragile and may become isolated without easy access to specialist support.

Or:

b) A partnership model where the base is operated as a satellite of a special school but is located on a mainstream 'host' school site, where the pupils are on-roll and the base is managed and staffed by the special school.

This model has the benefit of building on strong practice within the special school sector. The 'partnership' model is well-established in Shropshire and is operated successfully by both of the special schools (Severndale and Woodlands) as well as by the Tuition, Medical and Behaviour Support Service (TMBSS). The model also addresses any concerns about the impact of such a provision on the statistics of the host school both in terms of attendance and attainment. This can be a major barrier to development particularly for smaller schools where the impact of a small group of learners may be pronounced.

These provisions would provide a primary age service to complement and feed into the secondary-age provision listed below.

2) Additional 'Hub' Provision for secondary-aged learners with communication & interaction difficulties (including Autism Spectrum Conditions)

In recent years Shropshire local authority has invested in development of the Kettlemere Centre, a specialist provision for secondary age children with special educational needs (SEN) in the area of Communication and Interaction (C&I) located in North West Shropshire. Although the development of this provision has seen a few setbacks (referenced elsewhere in this report) with no new pupils admitted for the past two years, the Centre will now benefit from a renewed focus and commitment both from Lakelands Academy and Shropshire Council and is expected to start receiving new learners in the Spring term 2018.

The management model for these hubs would be according to the same broad options as set out above under Proposal 1, i.e:

a) Mainstream-school led where learners are on the roll of the mainstream school

Or

b) A partnership model where the base is operated as a satellite of a special school but is located on a mainstream 'host' school site

3) Partnership Hubs for secondary-aged learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)

Currently there are some pupils with MLD attending Severndale Specialist Academy, who could potentially benefit from attending provision attached to mainstream school and from being educated closer to home as part of their local community. These are pupils who are too cognitively able to be well-served by broad spectrum special schools, where they may struggle to form peer groups and to feel a sense of belonging. There is an established and successful Severndale satellite at Mary Webb School for this type of learner, which is a proven model that could be replicated elsewhere either or both in the South and / or North Shropshire. This would have the dual benefit of reducing journey times for a significant number of learners as well as freeing up capacity at Severndale for pupils with the most complex needs.

4) A new school for pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties and associated Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC)³

Recent demand for places at Woodland's School (which is almost at capacity) has highlighted that there is sustained need for provision for learners whose needs are too complex and challenging to be adequately supported on mainstream school sites. Many of these learners may be categorised as having a primary need of either SEMH or ASC but social communication difficulties and high levels of anxiety, leading to challenging 'breakthrough' behaviours that are difficult to manage in a mainstream school, will be the common underpinning factor.

It is proposed that Shropshire seeks to develop a new Special Free School for this category of need, with provision potentially starting at year 5 through until year 14 (sixth form) to be located in south Shropshire.

i. Rationale for Prioritisation of Proposals

The recommendations have been prioritised based on the following:

- The developments are relatively cost effective making use of the space available in many of Shropshire's schools with spare capacity and are therefore relatively quick to implement
- The proposed spread of provision would address access and inclusion issues – both in relation to geographical reach but also in relation to enabling learners with SEND to access education closer to home in their own communities
- These proposals maximise and draw upon the respective strengths of mainstream and specialist providers
- The proposals will build capacity and skills with a significant impact on a wider range of learners beyond those attending the new provision. By locating the bases in mainstream schools there would be skills transfer between the specialist staff and those working in mainstream benefitting a wide range of vulnerable learners.

³ This report will use the term Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) as opposed to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); in the SEND Code of Practice ASD is the term used.

6. Stakeholder Feedback on Proposals

i. Consultation and Engagement Process

The above proposals have been informed and shaped by discussion and engagement with a number of stakeholders between November 2017 – January 2018. This consultation and engagement has included the following activities:

DATE	STAKEHOLDER	EVENT OR METHOD OF COMMUNICATION
10/11/2017	Parents and Carers	Shropshire Parent Carer Council AGM - Shrewsbury
10/11/2017 to 8/1/2018	Various Schools – Special, Mainstream and independent	Face to face meetings with a number of schools across Shropshire
29/11/2017 to 22/12/2017	All stakeholders	Strategic Review Discussion Document (Appendix 2) and Online questionnaire hosted on Shropshire Council’s Website (results attached as Appendix 3)
11/1/2018	Headteachers and Local Authority Officers	Central Policy Group meeting
1/2/2018	Secondary Headteacher’s	Presentation at Secondary Headteacher’s Briefing session

ii. Common themes expressed in feedback from parents

a. Desire for inclusive mainstream provision

Common themes that featured in many discussions were a desire for inclusive local provision that enabled pupils with SEND to be educated within their local community and to attend local mainstream provision close to home.

b. Training and support for mainstream providers – with improved links between mainstream and specialist sectors

There was a feeling that for this to happen successfully there was the need for improved training and support for mainstream settings and a view that the Local Authority should be willing and able to challenge schools that were *not* meeting their duties in the SEND Code of Practice. Many respondents welcomed the prospect of closer working between specialist and mainstream providers.

c. Demands for Increased choice

There was also a common theme of parents wanting a wider range of choices and a feeling that there were limited options regarding specialist provision available locally, driving demand for independent specialist provision. A number of parents specifically highlighted the lack of choice for learners with Significant Learning Difficulties, with access to only one in-county special school, but there was more widespread recognition that the bigger gaps were in relation to the lack of provision for learners with social communication difficulties / ASC.

iii. Responses to Online Consultation

Feedback was received from 42 respondents to the online consultation regarding each of the four proposals listed in Section 5 above. The full report is included as **Appendix 2**, but is summarised below, as follows:

1) Specialist Resourced Provision for primary aged learners with communication & interaction difficulties (including Autism Spectrum Conditions)

There was widespread agreement that this should be a priority area for development and an 87% positive reaction and only 7% negative. Responses demonstrated a widely held view that there are many learners not coping well in mainstream classrooms but who were cognitively and socially able to benefit from aspects of an inclusive mainstream environment.

There were more positive responses for these settings being specialist provider-led, but there were marginally more respondents who felt there could be a mixed market with the right mainstream schools supported to lead the model rather than there *only* being specialist-led provision (*“the ethos of school and environment are a very important consideration to take into account.”*).

There was some wariness about the breadth of the definition of ‘Communication and Interaction Difficulties’ with concern that this included a wide range of lower level needs that might be better served in mainstream classrooms. There were others who wanted a broader more inclusive and flexible model to include learners with SLD.

2) Additional 'Hub' Provision for secondary-aged learners with communication & interaction difficulties (including Autism Spectrum Conditions)

Similarly to Proposal 1 there was widespread agreement that this should be a priority area for development reflected in a 77.5% positive reaction and only 7.5% negative.

A few respondents expressed concern that the implementation of the provision at Kettlemere had not been as positive as expected and wanted reassurance that there would not be similar issues if further secondary sites were developed. There were more positive responses for these provisions being specialist provider-led (75% positive as opposed to 65% positive for mainstream-led).

However, the overall responses more clearly favoured the 'mixed model' in secondary, which was explained by comments such as *"Some secondaries are already doing this well, so should be able to build on their existing support"*.

3) Partnership Hubs for secondary-aged learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)

84% of respondents were positive about this proposal, with no negative responses. There were a few queries raised in the comments suggesting that it might be possible to meet these needs in mainstream secondary schools *without* the need for specialist provision – e.g. *"Most schools do OK at providing this provision, but could be upskilled by schools which are outstanding examples of best practice. Not sure of a need for a whole new facility to meet this need."*

One respondent seemed to query whether this should be prioritised above other needs – *"We need Autism/ADHD specific schools. Telford & Wrekin have 4 & we need a few in Shropshire."*

4) A new Free school for pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties and associated Autism Spectrum Conditions

84% of respondents were positive with only 8% negative. Generally, most comments were positive about the proposal, but a number of respondents queried mixing pupils with ASC needs with those with SEMH needs – e.g. *"It is important to remember that not all ASC children can be co-sited on a school with SEMH needs, as the needs of both groups are different."*

Specialist Provision Development Plan for Shropshire

1. Recommendations for Special Provision Fund

i. Recommendation 1 – Develop a Mixed Model of Specialist Satellite Sites along with Mainstream-led Resourced Provision

In keeping with the feedback from the majority of respondents, a mixed model of provision is recommended allowing for both mainstream and specialist provider led models.

Where mainstream schools are 'Good' or better at Ofsted and where they have demonstrated an inclusive ethos, then they should be supported to develop and manage this provision. In order to support this there should be a Service Level Agreement underpinning the terms of the agreement (covering admission process and entry criteria, funding, etc). It is recommended that this SLA includes provision of support either from a Specialist Provider or another appropriate source.

Where mainstream schools are unwilling or unsuitable to be the lead agency, then the preferred model should be for the development of special school satellites. Identification and selection of the partner special schools to operate these bases will be identified and selected in discussion with the host school and may include the option of developing satellites from providers either within or outside Shropshire. Where there is a clear case for selection (such as where there is an established provision already operating on-site, or where there is a strong relationship between the host and provider schools) the selection may be pre-determined, but where there are a number of potential providers in a given area, there will be a competitive and transparent selection process.

Again, in order to support this model there should be a three-way Service Level Agreement underpinning the terms of the agreement (covering admission process and entry criteria, funding, etc) between the Local Authority, the Specialist Provider and the Host School.

ii. Recommendation 2 – Implement Proposals 1 & 2 in the Following Locations and Target Numbers of Places

There has been strong and widespread support regarding the gaps in provision. It is therefore strongly recommended to start development of this provision at the earliest opportunity.

In order to ensure comprehensive area-wide coverage the recommendation for Proposals 1 and 2 would be to establish **4 primary and 4 secondary provisions** building on the established provision at Kettlemere in Oswestry for secondary and Woodlands School's Acorns Hub provision in Bishops Castle for Primary, providing an all-through pathway in each of the following areas:

AREA	PRIMARY PLACES & LOCATION	SECONDARY PLACES & LOCATION
North West (Oswestry / Ellesmere)	10	24 EXISTING: Kettlemere Centre – Lakelands Academy. Ellesmere
North East (Market Drayton / Whitchurch)	10	20
Central (Shrewsbury)	10	20
South West (Bishops Castle)	12 EXISTING: Acorns (Woodlands Satellite) – Bishops Castle	20
South East (Bridgnorth)	10	20
TOTAL	50	104

The reason for the greater volume of places in Secondary is that a significant number of learners who *are* able to cope in smaller primary environments, then struggle to cope in larger, busier secondary school environments.

The following options have been identified following the schools listed submitting an ‘expression of interest’ in development of specialist provision:

AREA	PRIMARY PHASE	SECONDARY PHASE
North West Shropshire	Whittington CofE (Aided) Primary School , Station Road, Whittington, Oswestry, SY11 4DA. To be developed through light refurbishment of existing accommodation to offer 10 places. Model would be mainstream school-led as school has	Kettlemere Hub operational for secondary age learners. Operated by Lakelands Academy - Mainstream-led

AREA	PRIMARY PHASE	SECONDARY PHASE
	<p>demonstrated strength in its existing SEN provision.</p> <p>This location would feed into Kettlemere Hub thereby creating an all-through pathway.</p>	
<p>Central Shropshire (Shrewsbury)</p>	<p>St Andrew’s CofE Primary School, Hopton Lane, Nesscliffe, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 1DB.</p> <p>To be developed through light refurbishment of existing accommodation to offer 10 places.</p> <p>Schools is part of the Westcliffe Federation.</p> <p>Model would be mainstream school-led as school has demonstrated strength in its existing SEN provision. Could link with potential Central Shropshire secondary provision – tbc.</p> <p>Potential site also identified at Kinnerley Primary (also part of Westcliffe Federation) for potential future development.</p>	<p>Potential secondary site identified but at an early stage and remains subject to confirmation.</p>
<p>South West Shropshire</p>	<p>Acorns Hub is already operational offering 12 places for primary learners operated by Woodlands School on the site of the Community College Bishops Castle</p>	<p>Recommending a scaled back version of existing plans for Community College Bishops Castle through refurbishment of existing accommodation to develop a provision for 16-20 learners.</p> <p>Recommendation that the secondary base is operated as a satellite base of Woodlands School, given that they are</p>

AREA	PRIMARY PHASE	SECONDARY PHASE
		already managing the primary provision on the same site.
South East Shropshire (Bridgnorth)	Two potential primary school sites identified – under investigation and options analysis. Remains subject to confirmation. Could be either a specialist satellite, or a mainstream-led model.	Oldbury Wells School (part of Bridgnorth Area Schools’ Trust) has identified a number of options on site that would require refurbishment of existing accommodation to develop a provision for 16-20 learners. School are considering their options for either a specialist satellite, or a mainstream-led model.
North East Shropshire (Whitchurch / Market Drayton)	No clear options identified as yet. No expressions of interest direct from mainstream schools – but potential options under investigation.	No clear options identified as yet. No expressions of interest direct from mainstream schools – but potential options under investigation

iii. Recommendation 3 - Integrate Proposals 2& 3 - Secondary Provision

There is a significant overlap between Proposals 2 & 3 in terms of the mechanics of the model, based on partnership between special and mainstream schools; indeed the only distinction is in the category of needs served. Currently the major pressure on Shropshire is in the lack of provision specifically for learners with Autism Spectrum Conditions⁴ (ASC), BUT it was observed in the SEND Needs Assessment that given Shropshire’s comparatively low level of identification of ASC and comparatively high identification of MLD there is a strong likelihood (confirmed by feedback from a number of contributors to the review) that there is significant level of overlap between these apparently distinct needs. Good quality, flexible provision would be capable of supporting both categories in a flexible and personalised way in the same setting. A number of the comments gathered during the consultation regarding

⁴This report will use the term Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) as opposed to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); although it is acknowledged that in the SEND Code of Practice ASD is the term used.

Proposal 3 acknowledged this or suggested that the need for provision for ASC was more acute than that for MLD.

Given these facts, it is recommended that Proposals 2 and 3 are in effect 'merged' and implemented under the same process rather than being seen as distinct and separate.

iv. Recommendation 4 - Stimulate Market Development By Encouraging New Entrants and Developing a Market Position Statement

Although Shropshire is well-served by its high-quality provision, the feedback from a significant number of parents was that they felt their choices were constrained by the limited range of providers serving Shropshire.

It is therefore recommended that where options for development exist, unless there are clear and compelling reasons to favour a particular provider (as set out above) opportunities should be actively sought to bring new specialist provider entrants to Shropshire in order to draw on new skills and expertise and to develop a more diverse and mixed range of provision. This would be encouraged through development and release of a Market Position Statement setting out the requirements and conditions for the local market.

v. Recommendation 5 - Start developing outline plans for a new Free school for pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties and associated Autism Spectrum Conditions

Although the DfE / ESFA have yet to announce the next round of Free School funding, and given therefore that the funding process remains uncertain, it is recommended that Shropshire actively identifies potential partners in a Free School bid as well as potential sites and locations.

vi. Recommendation 6 - Support Development of High Quality Independent Provision

Shropshire is currently well served by some of its independent provision and it is important to acknowledge that independent and non-maintained provision has an important role to play in meeting the needs of the most complex learners. It is therefore recommended that, where opportunities arise, partnerships with independent providers should be explored. This may include in the guise of providers of training and support to mainstream education providers where they are struggling to meet the needs of complex learners.

vii. Recommendation 7 - Support Development of Nurture Groups in mainstream schools

A common theme in the feedback received during the course of the review has been regarding perceived shortcomings in educational provision for children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties. Development of specialist provision for

more complex mental health needs requires input from Health Commissioners and CAMHS practitioners; such a development would in any case need to be built upon a firm foundation of universal and targeted support in mainstream – e.g. Nurture groups. Such provision sits at ‘SEN Support’ level and is therefore outside the scope of this review process, but it is recommended that consideration is given to a programme of development of nurture training (such as provided through the Nurture Group Network) and nurture groups in mainstream schools around Shropshire, as this has had dramatic results in other Authorities.

viii. **Recommendation 8 - Establish High Needs Provision Working Group**

Establish High Needs Provision Working Group including representation from the following groups:

- **Local Authority Representative – SEND Team / Property Services / Finance / Commissioning / Education Access**
- **Mainstream School Rep**
- **Special School Rep**
- **Parent Representative**
- **Consider appointing external support to provide specialist expertise to Project Manage the process**

The Group will require some level of delegated authority to oversee spending on the Special Provision Fund.

2. **Proposed Next Steps**

- i. Focus on development of mainstream based provision. Aim to establish 3-4 bases per year in different areas (subject to financial constraints). Continue to seek suitable sites across Shropshire
- ii. Seek permission from LA to draw down capital to support faster pace of development if this proves possible – to be back-filled from Special Provision Fund
- iii. Develop outline proposal for Free School bid at the earliest opportunity, including identification of potential sites and potential sponsoring Multi Academy Trust(s).
DEPENDENT ON THE PROCESS YET TO BE ANNOUNCED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

3. **Appendices**

- 1) Shropshire’s Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Needs Assessment 2018.
- 2) Strategic Review Discussion Document.
- 3) Strategic Review Questionnaire Results.