



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

14 July 2021

Report Title:	Proposals to Expand the Educational Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND)
Cabinet Portfolio	Children and Young People
Cabinet Member	Councillor Nova Charlton
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Report of	Jim Leivers Director of Children's Services jimleivers@sthelens.gov.uk 01744 671802
Contact Officer	Sharon Fryer Head of SEND & Inclusion sharonfryer@sthelens.gov.uk 01744 671037

Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	x
Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	x
Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	
Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	
Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	
Be a responsible Council	x

1. Summary

Summary of key issues in the report:

- 1.1 This report sets out the current position of SEND provision for pupils with autism and the increase in demand for specialist places.
- 1.2 The Council has received an allocation of £649,444 from the Department for Education SEND Capital Programme to invest in expanding the offer for pupils with SEND.
- 1.3 An independent review of high needs planning highlighted the increased demand for specialist education provision creating significant pressure in the high needs budget. The review recommended increasing provision within mainstream schools for pupils with autism, as part of a wider strategy to improve the spectrum of specialist provision.
- 1.4 Schools in St Helens have been asked to express an interest in managing a resourced provision for pupils with autism.
- 1.5 In order to make swift progress to establish the provisions, Cabinet is requested to Delegate authority to the Director of Children & Young People's Services to undertake initial consultation with schools and to provide Cabinet with further details of proposals following the consultation.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) Note the allocation of £649,444 from the Department for Education capital to invest in expanding the offer for pupils with SEND.
- ii) Note the proposal to expand the number of mainstream resourced provisions to accommodate up to 40 pupils with autism.
- iii) Delegate authority to the Director of Children & Young People's Services to undertake initial consultation with schools and to provide Cabinet with further details of proposals following the consultation.

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the allocation of capital to expand educational provision for pupils with SEND and to seek delegated authority to undertake the necessary consultation to inform proposals.

4. Background /Reasons for the recommendations

- 4.1 Local Authorities have a duty to secure sufficient appropriate education places for children and young people, including provision for SEND. This includes responsibility for securing and funding provision for children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, funded from the High Needs budget. St Helens currently has a continuum of provision for pupils with SEND, ranging from individual support in mainstream schools to designated special schools, supporting pupils with a range of needs.
- 4.2 Over the past five years, the growth in places at special schools in St Helens has significantly outstripped that in mainstream schools. As part of the duty to secure appropriate provision, an assessment of need of pupils with Special Educational Needs was undertaken in 2017 and identified various changes in the demand for places, including an increased demand for places for Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- 4.3 The first phase of improvement focused on creating capacity within special schools to stem the numbers of pupils requiring out of borough provision within the independent sector. This includes the creation of the Key Stage 5 base and expansion of pupil numbers at Mill Green, the Special Free School bid and the proposal to relocate and expand the numbers at Penkford SEMH School.
- 4.4 In 2019, St Helens Council commissioned an independent review of its high needs planning. The report confirmed the assessed need to expand provision for pupils across the current spectrum of provision, and in particular highlighted the need to re-focus on inclusion in mainstream schools and increase the range of SEND provision available to meet the needs of children with significant additional needs but able to access a mainstream curriculum.
- 4.5 The Department for Education (DfE) has allocated capital funding to local authorities to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in respect of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The purpose of the funding is to create new school places and improve existing facilities for children and young people with SEND with an Education, Health and Care Plan. St Helens will receive a total allocation of £649,444 in 2021/22.
- 4.6 Pupils placed in specialist resourced provision benefit from accessing education at a mainstream schools through a flexible approach, tailored and adapted to their needs. Pupil places in the resourced provisions are funded (from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block) at an appropriate rate so that a pupil's additional learning needs can be met. The level of funding will be broadly in line with how pupils are funded in existing specialist resourced provisions. A service level agreement between St Helens Council and the school will confirm the exact arrangements and expectations.
- 4.7 There are currently 4 resourced provisions attached to mainstream schools in St Helens. Consultation has recently concluded on the proposal to establish a fifth resourced base at Ashurst Primary School, for pupils with an assessed need of social, emotional and/or mental health issues. A review of the continuum of provision will enable a realignment of resourced

provision attached to mainstream schools to ensure that there are sufficient places to meet current and emerging demands. In line with the recommendations by Peopletoo, it is now proposed to expand specialist provision for up to 40 pupils, with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) where autism is the primary need.

- 4.8 The establishment of resourced provision is part of efforts to manage the pressures in the high needs budget, allowing learners to be placed in more cost effective provision, reducing the pressure on in borough specialist provision and reducing the need to place learners in more expensive independent specialist provision. There has been an increase in pupils being placed in specialist provision out of borough or in non-maintained provisions, with 42 pupils whose primary need of autism receiving their education in Out of Borough/non maintained placements. Of those 37 could have been placed within the St Helens maintained provision had there been sufficient places available for them.
- 4.9 In line with the aim to ensure pupils with SEND can access their education as far as possible within their local community, all mainstream primary and secondary schools have been asked to indicate their interest in 'hosting' an additional resource base for pupils for whom autism is a primary need. A number of schools have signalled their interest in taking this proposal forward. An assessment is underway of each proposal. Any adaptations to the school environments will be met by the capital funding from the SEND capital programme, approved through the relevant decision making process.
- 4.10 Once the proposals have been evaluated, the Council will recommend the establishment of the resource bases within the primary and secondary phases. The exact number of schools will depend on the availability of space and the level of capital investment required. The Council will follow the prescribed statutory process for the establishment of the provision as outlined in the statutory guidance 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools, Mainstream school: establish/remove/alter special educational needs (SEN) provision'. consultation).

5. Community Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The proposals to expand the education provision for children and young people with SEND will increase equity of service provision for children and young people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act. The proposal will have a positive impact for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability, by improving access to specialist provision which will ensure that their needs can be met within the borough.

6. Consideration of Alternatives

- 6.1 N/A

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The establishment of resourced provision allows for the placement of pupils in more cost-effective provision, reducing the pressure on in borough specialist provision and reducing the need to place learners in more expensive independent specialist provision. The establishment of resourced provision across the county increases the range of SEND provision available to meet the needs of children, particularly those children with significant additional needs but able to access a mainstream curriculum.

8. Implications

8.1 Legal Implications

The statutory process outlined in paragraph 4.10 above, must be followed to meet legal requirements.

8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

8.2.1 Social Value

8.2.1.1 Ensuring that pupils can have their needs met within their local community and promotes community inclusion.

8.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

8.2.2.1 Increasing development of resourced provision aims to provide more 'local' education provision and reduce journey times for the learner.

8.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

8.2.3.1 Children and young people with SEND tend to experience poorer health outcomes. Expanding local education provision ensures that children with SEND have access to local health provision to improve their health and wellbeing outcomes.

8.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

8.2.4.1 The development of in borough specialist provision aims to address the inequalities experienced by this special interest group in now being able to access provision in the local community.

8.3 Customers and Resident

8.3.1 The report provides an overview on the key areas of improvement for children and young people with SEND and their families.

8.4 Asset and Property

8.4.1 The expansion of provision within mainstream schools may require adaptations the school premises.

8.5 Staffing and Human Resource

8.5.1 There are no HR implications from this report.

8.6 Risks

8.6.1 There is a risk is that if the additional provision for pupils with autism needs is not established these children will not receive the specialist education, they need to support their needs and the ongoing pressure on the high needs budget will continue to grow.

8.7 Finance

8.7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The capital costs associated with this proposal will be met from the SEND Capital Grant funded by the Department for Education (DfE). The proposal will allow more efficient use of the SEND High Needs Block budget.

8.8 Policy Framework Implications

8.8.1 This proposal aims to deliver on the priority that children should have the best start in life and able to live independent lives as set out in the Borough Strategy.

9. Background papers

9.1 People too Report "High Needs Strategic Planning Review June 2020"

10. Appendices

10.1 S31 Grant Determination Letter for High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA).