



## SCHOOLS FORUM

### High Need Development Plan Progress

8 February 2021

Content Applicable to;		School Phase;	
Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools	X	Pre School	X
Academies	X	Foundation Stage	X
PVI Settings	X	Primary	X
Special Schools / Academies	X	Secondary	X
Local Authority	X	Post 16	X
		High Needs	X

#### Purpose of Report

Content Requires;		By;	
Noting	X	Maintained Primary School Members	
Decision	X	Maintained Secondary School Members	
		Maintained Special School Members	
		Academy Members	
		All Schools Forum	X

1. This report presents an update on progress in delivery of the High Needs Development Plan

#### Recommendations

2. That Schools Forum notes the report and the progress in the delivery of the High Needs Development Plan
3. That Schools Forum members consult with the groups they represent to make nominations for membership of the proposed working group to consider future options to address the growing demand and costs on high needs budgets.

## Introduction

4. A number of reports have been previously presented to Schools Forum that have set out;
  - the financial position of the High Needs Block and the reasons for it
  - the objectives of the High Needs Development Plan
  - the workstreams incorporated into the High Needs Development Plan

This report sets presents an update on the delivery of the plan and the successes and challenges to date.

## Background

5. The target for the programme is to mitigate against the pressures caused by rising costs and increasing demand. The High Needs Development Plan was agreed by the County Council's Cabinet on 18 December 2018. The plan is supported by a comprehensive programme plan with governance through The High Needs Board. A number of Reports have been presented to Forum for information since the plan was adopted.
6. The programme has been designed in collaboration Council's Transformation Unit and other support services. It is delivered through a multi-disciplinary approach with several workstreams, each with a lead from the Children & Family Services Department and working with agreed metrics to enable performance to be measured and reported. These metrics have been benchmarked commonly against other local authorities against the statistical nearest neighbours' group.

## Programme Summary

7. A summary of the programme workstreams, their focus is as follows:
  - **Inclusion Workstream** - The aim of this workstream is to ensure that LCC has an inclusive offer and supports the wider sector to support children and young people to ensure that childrens' needs are identified and supported as early as possible in the most appropriate settings to reduce the risk of needs unnecessarily escalating. The current focus of this workstream has been to launch a new inclusion service as part of a graduated response pathway that includes a review of the transition/overlap processes with SENA. Also, Secondary Education Inclusion Partnerships have been reviewed. In the coming year, this workstream will look to embed the changes already introduced to determine the impact that the service has had on ensuring children are supported earlier and their needs are appropriately met without the need for a statutory assessment.
  - **Strategy and Commissioning Workstream** – The workstream was completed in Autumn 2020 and the programme is now tracking the impact of the change that was delivered, which included the development and launch of a multi-agency SEND and Inclusion Strategy that is monitored at each meeting of the SEND and Inclusion Board. A key achievement of the strategy has been the development of a draft Joint Commissioning Strategy across LLR specifically to support children with SEND. This currently out for consultation and is due to be formally launch later in the Spring of 2021. This workstream has also launched a SEN Support Handbook to assist

parents/carers and professionals in ensuring children receive good SEN Support as soon as a need is identified.

- **Right Place Right Time** – The aim of this workstream is to ensure that all resources are making the best contributions to outcomes for children and young people as they progress through their education. The current focus of this workstream is ensuring that annual reviews are being conducted in a timely manner and ensure that the most appropriate support is in place to ensure outcomes for children are met. In the next year this workstream will also review the way in which resources are allocated to plans to ensure consistency and links to outcomes whilst giving providers flexibility to determine how those resources are used to deliver outcomes for children
- **SENA Whole System Review** – The aim of this workstream is to take a deep dive review of the SENA service and ensure processes, performance management and practice within the service are robust and efficient. This involves reviewing decision making, case management approaches as well as documents and templates. In the next year the impact of the changes will be embedded and monitored as well as looking at processes to support effective transition points for children, both in terms of inclusion but also commissioning.
- **Contracts and Commissioning** - Focused mostly on placements in the independent sector, the aim of this workstream is to ensure the achievement of value for money from all providers to achieve the outcomes outlined in children and young people's Education Health Care Plans. This involves challenging additional therapeutic costs as well as other 'non education' costs linked to the placement and economies of scale.
- **Sufficiency** – The aim of this workstream is to ensure that in the medium and long term we have the right provision in Leicestershire to cater for emerging demographic trends and housing development as well as ensuring that the provision is able to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the next year the emphasis will be on continuation of the delivery of our substantial capital programme as well as look to expand places for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities where and if appropriate.

The programme has developed 534 additional school places of which 459 are available from the autumn term, including;

- 17 new resource bases in mainstream schools for pupils with SEMH and C & I need.
- 3 new schools – 80 place Fusion C&I Academy in Barwell, 60 place Foxfields SEMH Academy in Blaby, and 60 place Bowman SEMH. Academy in Shepshed (to be built by DfE for opening September 2023)
- 2 new locations for Oakfield Short Stay School in Earl Shilton and Shepshed.
- A new post 16 provision in Loughborough (Block K at Charnwood College).

- 7 Expansion projects for all existing Leicestershire special schools
  - 2 satellite classroom facilities run by existing special schools on nearby mainstream school sites.
  - 1 new specialist pre-school in Melton and expansion of the Wigston Menphys Nursery.
- **Independent Provision Review** – The aim of this workstream is to ensure that independent placements are delivering the best outcomes for children and young people, outcomes are being actively achieved and that the fees are appropriate. The current focus is only challenging progress with a view to ensuring as many children and young people are able to attend inclusive settings that can meet their needs usually in the mainstream and special settings. This workstream is also working with colleagues in health around the type of therapies outlined in plans are therapies that are available through commissioning processes and where they are not, ensuring that they are appropriately funded and not relying on HNB funding.

### **Resource Implications**

8. The financial position of the High Needs Development Plan is set out in the 2021/22 Schools Budget report elsewhere on this agenda. Overall the financial position remains of concern and for the 4 years of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) the plan reports on-going annual deficits estimated to be £29.2m at the end of the four year period.
9. Whilst the High Needs Block Dedicated Schools Grant has increased annually, cost and demand have both increased from that set out within the original plan. A comparison of the original plan to that set out for 2021/22 for the period of the MTFS - 2021/22 to 2024/25 shows by the final year:
  - High Needs Block DSG is forecast to have risen by 19.3% to £81.96m
  - Savings are forecast to have risen by 7.8% to £19.73m
  - Costs are forecast to rise by 32.2% to £84.92m
  - Placements are forecast to rise by 7.7% to 5,547. This is an overall increase in numbers of 31.5% between April 2019 and March 2025
10. Whilst recognising that the issues behind the financial sustainability of the SEND system are systematic and of a national rather than local nature, local authorities are required to set aside resources to offset the deficit with is a unsustainable position in the medium to long term. Other actions to address the deficit are required and therefore there is a need to define and deliver these actions. This will require co-production of these actions with the local authority, schools and health colleagues.
11. Whilst the sufficiency plan has successfully delivered an increase in specialist provision across Leicestershire that provision has largely been filled by new demand. Whilst that does have a significant financial benefit through reducing future costs it has not had any significant impact in delivering the planned savings from the movement of pupils from higher cost placements into lower cost provision. Therefore, additional activity is required to help and assist in the management of demand.

12. The financial plan includes a transfer of 0.5% of DSG from the school block to the high needs block in 2022/23, such a transfer was proposed for 2021/22 which was not approved by Schools Forum. In deciding not to approach the Secretary of State for approval of the transfer Cabinet noted that work was on-going with schools to develop alternative measures to address the deficit. With the deficit showing no signs of being resolved further actions need to be identified. It should be noted that the financial position will worsen by £2m with no schools block transfer
13. Schools Forum have considered the financial position surrounding SEN placements over a number of years as well as being continually informed on the development of the current and previous programme of works to mitigate the financial concerns. It is proposed that a working group be established to consider the shape of any future actions, proposed membership of the working group be a Headteacher, Governor and Business Manager of each school phase, this would link to and work alongside the working group considering the proposed schools block transfer. Schools Forum members are asked, through the groups they represent, to make nominations.

#### Background Papers

Report to Cabinet 18 December 2018 – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – High Needs Block Development Plan

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s143211/SEND%20Strategy%20Report.pdf>

Report to Cabinet 24 May 2019 – Special Education and Disabilities Provision -Result of Consultation on the development of new provision (High Needs Block Development Plan)

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s145903/HNB%20Development%20Plan%20-%20Results%20of%20Consultation.pdf>

Report to Cabinet 22 November 2019 – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – Proposed Transfer of Funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s149602/SEND%20Cabinet%20report%20FINAL.pdf>

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