

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Corporate Priorities:
Caring for the vulnerable;
Delivering better services;

SEND Sufficiency Plan

Contact for further information:

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Brief Summary

This report provides a brief overview of developments to date in relation to increasing the range and availability of more specialist provision across the county. It also provides an overview of action currently being undertaken to increase the number of special school places for September 2024 and how specialist provision will be aligned with mainstream school place planning in the future.

Recommendation

The Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i) Reflect on the information provided and;
- ii) Provide comment on the proposals that are in train to develop the range and availability of specialist provision across Lancashire and consider ways to further support work in this area.

Detail

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Sufficiency Strategy 2019-2024 was developed in response to the increase in demand for specialist provision for children and young people, in particular areas across Lancashire, and within the context of increased pressure on the high needs block funding. The implementation of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy enables the county council to fulfil its statutory duties in relation to the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

In line with the principles and priorities identified within the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, 306 more special school places have been created since September 2021. In addition, 112 of the 244 Special Educational Needs unit places identified in the strategy are currently available, 48 should become available before or at the start of the 2024/25 academic year and another 56 are under consideration.



There has been 8% growth in the number of Education, Health and Care plans maintained by the local authority since 2017, however this increased to 10.6% in 2022 and there has been a further increase of 13.8% between November and January 2023. At the time of writing the local authority maintains 10,941 education, health and care plans. Growth in educational, health and care plans were below the national average prior to 2022, at which point it became more aligned with the national figure. Currently there is no benchmarking data available for 2023.

There has been a 4% increase in the number of special school places in Lancashire on average each year since 2018/19. It should be noted that 9% more children are educated in special schools in Lancashire, in comparison with the average across local authorities in England. There is evidence that greater inclusion in mainstream settings can improve the academic achievement for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, as well as their sense of belonging. To manage the increasing demand for more specialist provision across the county further, special and mainstream schools were invited to submit expressions of interest in July in relation to the following:

- The expansion of special school provision, either through the expansion of the existing school site or through the development of satellite provision.
- The creation of Special Educational Needs units attached to mainstream primary and secondary schools.

15 expressions of interest were received with respect to the expansion of special schools that provide support for pupils with significant learning difficulties and/or autism, two for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and three from schools or colleges interested in developing post-19 provision.

A further paper was presented to Cabinet in December 2023 which sought approval for completion of feasibility studies and initiation of informal consultations needed to create 205 additional special school places for September 2024, comprising 104 for children entering reception and/or of primary age, 76 for children transitioning into secondary school and 25 post-16 placements.

The distribution of these placements across the county are as presented in the table below.

| Geographical Location | Location for additional capacity: | Primary Places Needed | Secondary Places Needed | Specialist College |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------|
| South – Preston, South Ribble, Chorley, and West Lancashire | Leyland | 39 | Learning Disabilities/Autism Spectrum Disorder – 10 Social, Emotional, Mental Health – 19 | 16 |



| | | | | |
|---|----------------|----|--|---|
| East- Burnley, Pendle, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, and Rosendale | Burnley | 42 | Learning Disabilities/Autism Spectrum Disorder – 10 Social, Emotional, Mental Health – 15 | |
| North – Lancaster, | Lancaster | 11 | Learning Disabilities/Autism Spectrum Disorder – 6 Social, Emotional, Mental Health – 9 | 9 |
| North – Fylde and Wyre | Fylde and Wyre | 12 | Social, Emotional, Mental Health - 7 | |

There may need to be a consideration for identifying suitable spaces within a central location with easy access to the M6 motorway, to be used as a satellite provision that pupils with social, emotional and mental health issues in the North area can access.

It is anticipated that most of these additional school placements will be created through the expansion on the existing sites of special schools that put forward an expression of interest, although it may be that some of these places will be developed through satellite provision. Work is underway to complete the required feasibility studies and ensure plans are in place to create the additional places required.

From January 2024 it is anticipated that special school place planning will be aligned with that for mainstream school places and thus there will be a joint approach across the county.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The county council and partners across education, health and care are required to work together to plan for and meet the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities, in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice 2014.

If the decision was not to proceed with the proposals detailed in this report, the risk would be insufficient places and potential for increased costs out of area. This proposal, which will be presented to Cabinet on 7 December 2023, mitigates the risk of this and the county council failing in its duty to provide sufficient school places.



Property Asset Management

Any works necessary in respect of increasing the availability of special school provision is identified through the feasibility studies.

Financial

Any building works that are agreed by the authority outlined in the proposals to increase the availability of special needs provision throughout the county will be funded via the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation. This is grant funding and the amounts of funding available may limit the schemes that are deliverable.

By increasing the county council's internal Special School Provision, this will enable progress to be made towards keeping up with the demand for special school places and reducing reliance on the use of independent school placements which present a growing pressure on high needs block funding.

The demand increased by 10.7% in 2022 in comparison with 2021. Prior to this, the average increase in demand has been 8% per year. The indicative funding allocations for the High Needs Block in the revenue budget are expected to increase by 3% per year. This is likely to increase the gap between expenditure and funding over the next few years. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities sufficiency work is being carried out to address these issues, and to prevent Lancashire County Council going into a High Needs Deficit Position. The additional internal places created will therefore help to support the growing financial pressures on the High Needs Revenue Budget.

There are sufficient funds currently uncommitted to meet the costs of this project.

Equality and Cohesion

This proposal impacts on both the age (young people) and disability protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 and is designed to contribute positively to the Public Sector Equality Duty's general aim of advancing equality of opportunity and its related aim of increasing participation in public life for these children and young people, their families and carers.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

| Paper | Date | Contact/Tel |
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

