

**SEN EDUCATION PLACEMENT STRATEGY**

*To:* **Cabinet**

*Date:* **17th April 2012**

*From:* **Judith Davies, Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services, Children and Young People's Services**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **No**

*Purpose:* **To approve the Special Educational Needs Education Placement Strategy**

*Recommendation:* **Cabinet is asked to:**  
  
**Approve the Special Educational Needs Education Placement Strategy attached as appendix 2 to this report to address the increased financial pressure on the Special Educational Need Placement Budget.**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 There are just under 3000 children and young people within Cambridgeshire with a Statement of Special Educational Need. Of these children and young people, 784 attend special schools within Cambridgeshire. However, for some children and young people Cambridgeshire's schools are not able to meet their needs and they require an independent specialist educational placement. These placements are funded by the Special Educational Needs Education Placements budget. In 2011/12, 104 children and young people were funded in highly specialist, high cost placements usually, but not always, outside of the county.
- 1.2 The decision to place a child or young person in an independent specialist educational placement occurs through one of the following processes:
- Agreement following discussion at County Resourcing Panel
  - Agreement following discussion at Children's Allocation Meeting that the child meets the thresholds for accommodation and this is supported by the County Resourcing Panel.
  - The placement is directed by a Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal
  - Children with a Statement of Special Educational Need transfer into the county and the Council must honour the provision.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

### **2.1 MANAGING THE INDEPENDENT SPECIALIST EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT SPEND**

- 2.1.1 Funding for independent specialist educational placements principally comes from the Special Educational Needs Education Placements budget which is funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant. A number of placements are jointly funded by Social Care, Health and Education. Health currently part funds an average of 6% of the cost of a placement. Placement costs range from £22,232 to £287,000 for residential 52 week placement. Average costs are £83,886 for a 38 week placement, £199,514 for a 52 week placement £42,374 a year for a day placement.

The Special Educational Needs Placements budget for independent specialist educational placements is £5,681,068 for 2011/12. In March 2011, the Special Educational Needs Placements budget had reached an overspend of £1.4 million, which has been reduced by £800,000 to £600,000. The reason for this is set out below. The Council has committed to making further savings against this budget.

- 2.1.2 Tribunal decisions (orders) placed 26 children and young people in independent specialist educational placements in 2011/12.
- 2.1.3 There has been a growth in the number of children and young people with high functioning Autistic Spectrum Condition requiring specialist day placements (total cost of £1,104,470 for 22 placements). The prevalence rate of Autistic Spectrum Conditions among children is currently 1 in 100 pupils.

Once placed, a young person can remain in a placement until they leave full time education up to the academic year they are 19 (Education Act 2001).

#### 2.1.4 Managing this budget brings with it a number of challenges:

- It must fully meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable children and young people
- Children tend to stay in their placements a long time which means that changing the shape and delivery of places is a long process
- There is often no alternative available in county provision

## **2.2 REASONS FOR THE INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE BUDGET**

2.2.1 National statistics show that the number of families with a disabled child rose from 700,000 in 2004 to 950,000 in 2010. This is principally due to 80% of children born at 26 week gestations now surviving and that 50% of those children have severe and complex disabilities. In Cambridgeshire for the period 2007-2009 there were 313 babies born weighing less than 1.5 kg, with 96 below 1kg.

2.2.2 There is an increase in the frequency of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (with one in 500 children now being born with the disorder) this may account for as many as one in 100 children with similar needs to Autistic Spectrum Condition.

2.2.3 There is an expected increase in the population due to the development of new housing in Cambridgeshire. It is estimated that new housing areas could bring additional requirements for 180 more children and young people with complex needs.

2.2.4 There is only one independent specialist education provider in Cambridgeshire who provides specifically for Autistic Spectrum Condition. This school fills a gap in the market for high functioning Autistic Spectrum Condition primary age specialist education. In this financial year 104 children were placed in independent specialist education, 55 have Autistic Spectrum Condition and of these 38 have high functioning Autistic Spectrum Condition.

2.2.5 There has been a gradual rise in the cost of children beginning an independent specialist educational placement against the cost of those who have left. The average cost of a new placement in 2011 was £80,000 per year, compared to the placements of those who have left in 2011 which cost on average £50,000 per year.

## **2.3 RESPONSE TO THE INCREASED DEMAND**

2.3.1 A strategy has been developed with a view to:

- Keep children and young people in Cambridgeshire with their families
- Provide high quality education provision as close to home as possible
- Reduce spend on independent specialist educational placements where provision can be made more cost effectively elsewhere
- Reduce the number of independent specialist educational placements where provision can be made elsewhere that is as good

- Provide effective and collaborative monitoring and review of placements
- Improve the review and monitoring of independent specialist educational placements
- Consult with families and young people in developing in county provision

2.3.2 The strategy considers how to reduce the independent specialist educational placement spend through improved commissioning to meet the needs of Cambridgeshire children and young people. The strategy seeks to ensure that there is appropriate provision available within county and to reduce the number of high cost placements. The strategy takes account of the predicted future need and sets out how we ensure that we have affordable provision available. A multi agency commitment will be essential to deliver the aims of this strategy as the response to meeting the needs of these very complex children and young people and their families can encompass all services and agencies. Where a service is not deliverable and is required this can lead to the need for an Independent Specialist Education Placement. Some facts about the Strategy are set out in Appendix 1 with the full strategy set out in appendix 2.

## **2.4 KEY ACTIONS**

**Key actions that are proposed in the strategy are set out below:**

### **2.4.1 Shared Care Provision**

Develop a menu of provision to support families in caring for their disabled child in order to prevent them coming into full time residential school/care placements. This provision will support the families by providing regular part time care between three to four nights per week with either a foster carer or in a residential unit. Cabinet have agreed to support this proposal through an invest to transform loan as part of the Integrated Planning Process.

### **2.4.2 Special School Funding**

Development of a new scheme for special schools to make funding needs led and transparent while promoting creative responses to need and reduce the risk of appeal by parents for highly specialist independent schools.

### **2.4.3 Area Special School Specification**

To ensure the delivery of a consistently high quality core curriculum and care across all Area Special Schools whilst supporting flexibility to enable the school to have a local response to need. A clear specification will be implemented to develop staff skills through a programme of Continuing Professional Development, clarify the core offer from Health, develop quality facilities and premises to enable schools to meet the requirements of children and young people with complex needs who currently are placed in independent specialist educational placements.

### **2.4.4 Commission an additional Area Special School**

To commission a new Area Special School to respond to demographic growth

as identified in the Area Special School Specification. This proposal is detailed within the 5 year capital programme.

#### 2.4.5 Commission an Autistic Spectrum Condition Day School

To establish in Cambridgeshire up to 20 day places for primary school aged children with high functioning Autistic Spectrum Condition, to reduce placement in independent specialist schools. Cabinet have agreed to support this proposal through an invest to transform loan as part of the Integrated Planning Process.

#### 2.4.6 Review of existing provision

To explore if there are any young people who can return from the Independent Specialist Educational Placements at the end of year 11.

#### 2.4.7 Partnership working

To jointly commission with regional partners local and cost effective provision whilst exploring opportunities for joint commissioning with Health.

#### 2.4.8 Behaviour Management Guidance

Develop a consistent behaviour management strategy to be applied across settings, services and agencies to support children and young people with complex behavioural needs.

### 3. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

#### 3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The SEN Education Placement Strategy redirects spend into Cambridgeshire. The new provision will increase employment opportunities within the County.

#### 3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

Children and young people are able to attend school in county and remain within their families as the Council will be able to meet their education, and care needs locally through high quality provision. This will in turn support the development of effective transition planning into post 16 education, training and employment. The proposals will also support the "Health Passport" for young people transferring to the adult service.

#### 3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

Children and young people with complex Special Educational Needs receive access to high quality education and their families are supported on meeting their needs.

#### 3.4 Ways of Working

The strategy outlines investment in new local education and care provision, as well as developing a highly skilled workforce. The provision will be developed through a detailed specification and a rigorous procurement programme to meet the growth in population needs as well as the increase in Special Educational Needs and disability.

#### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

##### **4.1 Resource and Performance Implications**

The proposals will be developed and implemented within existing budgets. This will leave the Council better placed to manage resources within budget.

##### **4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

The strategy supports the authority in meeting its statutory duties.

##### **4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications**

Currently families with disabled children do not have access to a range of local services and provision to meet their need. The implementation of the strategy will improve access by providing an increased number of local services.

##### **4.4 Engagement and Consultation**

Children and Young People's Services have engaged in consultation with parents, carers, school staff, governors, Health and appropriate services within Children and Young People's Services. The proposals have also been placed on line for comment. There is broad agreement to proceed with the proposals.

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
SEN Education Placement Strategy	<a href="http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/parents/special_needs/sen_consult.htm">http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/parents/special_needs/sen_consult.htm</a> .