

CABINET

Date: 10 April 2018

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## Outcomes of the Special Educational Needs & Disability Strategy and Capacity Consultation

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, Cath McEvoy

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Wayne Daley

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### **Purpose of report.**

This report provides an update to Cabinet on the outcomes of consultation that has been carried out seeking the views of parents, carers, education and health professional on the Northumberland Area SEND strategy. The consultation included a range of options and ideas on capacity could be increased within the county's special schools. The report provides an update on the outcomes of informal consultation on the proposals to increase the capacity at Hexham Priory School through the enlargement of its building, and at The Dales School, Blyth through the addition of a satellite site in Ashington; Cabinet is also asked to approve the publication of statutory proposals in relation to the expansion of these schools.

### **Recommendations**

#### **It is recommended that**

- 1) Cabinet approve the adoption of a revised Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy as a result of the consultation with parents and others.**
- 2) Approve a more detailed consultation on options to expand capacity for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities throughout Northumberland.**

Cabinet 10 April 2018

- 3) **Note the informal consultation that has taken place on a proposal to increase the capacity at Hexham Priory School.**
- 4) **Note the proposal and rationale to increase capacity at The Dales School by 50 places through the addition of a satellite site in Ashington to be called 'Ashdale' and approve the addition of this site to the school with effect from 1 September 2018.**
- 5) **Permit the publication of a statutory proposal setting out the intention of the County Council to increase the capacity of Hexham Priory School by an additional 32 places through the enlargement of the school building with effect from 1 September 2018.**
- 6) **Note that the outcomes of the informal consultation on the options to expand capacity for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and the outcomes of the formal consultation following publication of the Statutory Proposals in relation to Hexham Priory and The Dales Schools would be brought back to Cabinet in June for a decision.**

### **Key issues**

1. There is an increase in numbers of children and young people who have Autism, social emotional and mental health needs. Northumberland's 8 maintained special schools have seen numbers rise by 32% between 2013 and 2017 as shown in the table below :

<b>Special School</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Atkinson House	62	53	56	59	66
Barndale House	36	38	40	37	39
Cleaswell Hill	126	149	155	163	173
Collingwood School	105	129	145	137	137
Cramlington Hillcrest	46	56	58	62	74
Hexham Priory	61	65	77	78	89
The Dales School	68	73	76	76	89
The Grove School	36	39	42	43	45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>712</b>

2. There is therefore no capacity to accommodate additional pupils. Given that Northumberland's 8 maintained special schools are all either good or outstanding, the Council reiterates its intention to reverse the trend of increasing out of County placements by increasing the capacity to provide quality SEN education within the county, and enable pupils to be educated within their communities. In order to begin to address this pressure, Northumberland is investing capital funds developing additional capacity (75 places) at Hexham Priory and The Dales.

Cabinet 10 April 2018

3. This increasing need, alongside greater financial constraints within our schools has resulted in increased demand for specialist educational places that has outstripped capacity.
4. Between October - December 2017, Northumberland County Council undertook an informal consultation on the current Vision and Strategy for meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). A further aim of the consultation was to also seek views on options to increase our school capacity and education provision across Northumberland.
5. Five public events were held in Berwick, Hexham, Ponteland, Alnwick and Cramlington, with a specific aim of improving our engagement with parents, children and young people. These events were all well attended, by parents, carers, students, education and health professionals who all came along to find out more detail on the proposals and express their views. As a result of this consultation we received written 206 responses.
6. Hexham Priory School in the west of Northumberland currently has the capacity for 80 pupils with pupils aged between 3 and 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (P+MLD). The school is currently operating at above its physical capacity with the Planned Admission Number of 80 currently being exceeded (as of June, 2017 - 92). The additional pupils that the school has admitted have been accommodated in the school's specialist teaching rooms with the loss of amenity that these rooms provide including the loss of the Young Enterprise scheme, the Arts Award programme and the loss of 'messy play' provision within the 'Discovery Room'. Current pupil number projection data indicates that the population of school aged children with profound and multiple needs in the west of the county is forecast to continue to rise:

Historical Number on Roll (NOR) at Hexham Priory School:

January 2013: 61

January 2014: 65

January 2015: 77

January 2016: 78

January 2017: 89

June 2017: 92

7. This indicates a 50.8 per cent increase in the NOR within the last 5 years. Although very difficult to be precise with forecasts, within Hexham Priory School's catchment area, there are approximately 5 pre-school learners and 5 school aged admissions per year and as a consequence the school is forecast to grow at an average of 5 pupils/year until it peaks at 150. It should be noted

that the increased need for provision is driven by a more complex not less complex generation of learners.

The projected pupil numbers for Hexham Priory School are as follows:

2017-18: 95

2018-19: 100

2019-20: 105

Further detail is provided in the Business Case within the Background Papers to this report.

8. The Dales School in Blyth provides places for children who have been assessed to be on the autistic spectrum, as well as children with social emotional and mental health needs and speech language and communication difficulties. Northumberland County Council is incurring significant costs from students in Northumberland being educated in specialist provision outside of the county. For the years 2017-2018 the out-of-county provision costs incurred by Northumberland County Council amount to **£5.15 million** and incorporates an overspend for the year of **£1.8 million**. The costs of associated with some out of county provision could potentially be met through a new provision in Ashington run as a satellite school of The Dales. There are **131 SEN pupils** that attend provision outside the county of Northumberland. This provision is made up of 18 different providers. Further detail is provided in the Business Case for this project provided within the Background Papers to this report.
9. Hexham Priory and The Dales are very popular and successful schools with an outstanding Ofsted rating. The additional capacity at both schools would provide places for children aged 4 to 11. These places would be offered in a phased way once the extension at Hexham Priory is completed and the Ashdale site has opened from 1 September 2018. There would be no change to the current admissions arrangements at the schools. There may be some movement of pupils between The Dales site in Blyth and Ashdale, but this would be based on need and not a regular occurrence. The leadership team and staff employed by The Dales would work across both sites, allowing for the possibility of whole school activities where appropriate. The Governing Body would take on governance responsibility for the Ashdale site. The rationale for the location of the satellite site in Ashington is to provide places to children with SEND within their local community.
10. In the light of the demand for places for children with these needs in Northumberland set out in para. 4, a report was given to the Capital Strategy Group in July 2017 for review setting out proposals to increase the capacity at these two schools. The minutes of the Capital Strategy Group meeting were reported to Cabinet in July 2017. Consultation on the proposal to increase the capacity at Hexham Priory School by 32 places by enlargement of the

Cabinet 10 April 2018

school's building took place on January 25 at the school and 25 consultees attended, including parents and staff.

11. Due to the size of the increase in capacity at Hexham Priory, a statutory proposal would be required to be published. Cabinet are now requested to permit publication of the statutory proposal as set out at recommendation 4 of this report.
12. Cabinet are also requested to permit the addition of the 50 place satellite site for The Dales School to be located in Ashington and named Ashdale after consideration of the information set out at para. 5.

### **Aims and Key findings from the consultation**

13. There were two key aims of the consultation, they were to seek views
  - Our vision and strategy for the local area in supporting children and young people with SEND between 2017-2020.
  - In order to develop a draft place planning strategy to grow specialist provision within Northumberland to ensure children with SEND are educated close to home in high quality education establishments, giving greater opportunity for social inclusion within the communities in which they live.
14. The outcome of the consultation in relation to the vision and strategy, was very encouraging in that the vast majority of respondents were in broad agreement that the key strategic objectives within the draft strategy were suitable to drive the improvements necessary to ensure that the code of practice was fully implemented. The full detailed report is available as Appendix 1 and the key findings are detailed below
15. **Capacity, Funding and Resources.** This was the most frequently raised issue within the consultation. Where views expressed agreement with the statement, they were often followed by concern that funding issues may affect its achievement. In addition there were many comments around the fact that meeting SEND effectively in our schools is at present compromised by lack of resources and/or inequalities in funding. Concern about lack of a continuum of support was frequently raised; a lack of places in specialist provisions combined with the geographical challenge of the county. Suggestions were made about additionally resourced provisions being established to meet need
16. **Training and Workforce Development.** Developments suggested were particularly around an urgent need to develop skills in frontline education and health staff. This would promote more inclusive schools and enable children

Cabinet 10 April 2018

and young people to remain in schools close to their communities. Training and workforce development would also further promote early identification and support staff to be more confident in meeting identified needs. There were a number of responses which suggested that there is significant mainstream provision which is not inclusive in its philosophy. The council is reviewing its service level agreement with schools.

17. **Listening to children, Young People and Families.** There were strong responses from parents/carers whose experiences had clearly been difficult, but the widespread view was that the voice of learners and their families should hold higher value than it currently does. There is a need to ensure that the voice of the child or young person and their family is central to all decision making about services, their provision and their development.
18. **Communication, collaboration and multi agency working.** Developing joined up working across health, education and social care was identified as being a priority throughout the consultation. Communication between agencies including schools and other professionals and between professionals and parent/carer/learner was often perceived to be inconsistent. The communication of information to parents and children/young people in accessible formats was raised a number of times.
19. **Timeliness.** Time taken to identify needs, response time following referrals (particularly to CYPS) and delays associated with unclear pathways were all frequently cited as areas for development. It was referenced in questions relating to early identification, school aged SEND provision and for post 16.
20. **Preparation for Adulthood.** The need for clearer pathways into adulthood was identified with greater clarity over provision available and how to access it was cited by parents as an area for improvement. In addition to the above key themes, there were other common themes within the consultation. These included: Joint commissioning and the need to develop more joined up commissioning between education, health and social care. Increased accountability within the system to ensure equitable allocation of scarce resources. This covered internal LA (Local Authority) data systems and those for additional fund allocation (EHCP and top up) and also systems by which schools could be held to account to ensure the appropriate use of funds to effectively meet need. Sharing best practice between some of the highly inclusive mainstream settings in Northumberland. Delivering a curriculum which suits individual learners in specialist and mainstream provisions.
21. There was considerable positivity about the vision statement reflecting that the respondents felt it to be 'ethical and inclusive', representing that it presents a coordinated approach to SEND services across the county. There was also evidence that multi-agency working is being established and developing well; the early intervention hubs, the Children's hearing Services Working Group.

'Partnership working has already improved over the past few years', and ' I think that all professionals in the health service and education want exactly the same thing, and that is for the children of Northumberland to be given the best start in life.' Some individual schools noted that aspects of SEND support have been readily available. Positive comments were also made around provision for SEND in first and primary schools in particular e.g 'My experience is that the majority of first schools meet the goal of being welcoming, accessible and inclusive'.

22. As a result of these key findings of the consultation a revised Vision and Strategy for the local area in supporting children and young people with SEND 2017-2020 has been produced and is shown in Appendix 2.

23. In order to give some structure to the consultation on options to increase our schools capacity, there were some key criteria that were set in order to develop the very broad potential models they were:

- More specialist places for pupils who can't access mainstream education.
- Locally based specialist provision in mainstream schools
- Affordable and sustainable provisions within the current and future national funding streams

24. The views of the consultees were sought on these models, and they were also asked to provide alternative suggestions. The detail on these outcomes is contained in Appendix 3 Whilst in the main each of the proposed models to grow capacity was supported by the consultee's.

25. In order to focus the council's resources it is proposed to consult based on the area of greater need. The priority area for expansion is in the south east and central areas of the county. These areas have seen the greatest increase in demand for places in our special schools. In order to meet this increased demand it is proposed to consult on growing capacity at Cleaswell Hill Special School in Guidepost, Collingwood Special School in Morpeth, Hillcrest Special School in Cramlington, The Dales Special School in Blyth.

26. In addition it is proposed to explore options with local independent specialist providers on how they can support with the growth in capacity. Consultation will also be seeking alternative options and ideas on how the local authority can best grow capacity to meet the demand for Children and young people with SEND, including our work with Nunykirk Hall and The Percy Hedley Foundation.

27. As a result of the initial consultation there is also clear support from parents and carers to grow specialist unit on mainstream school sites particularly those in the west and the north where there is the least concentration of pupils. There was however very limited feedback from the schools themselves on these options, so it is proposed to hold discussions with all Northumberland Schools and Academies in order to co-produce a plan for consultation on growing capacity in mainstream schools.

### **Consultation.**

28. If approved, the consultation at this stage, for Cleaswell Hill, Collingwood, The Dales and Hillcrest would be categorised as 'informal' and would last for six weeks. A consultation document would be made available to all relevant stakeholders, including parents, pupils, and staff. The consultations would focus on a wide range of factors, including:-

- Reasons and rationale for the various proposals
- Pupil transition
- Admissions arrangements
- The home to school transport, and the travel and car use implications of the proposal.
- SEN/additional needs
- Staffing issues
- The Sport and Recreation implications of the proposal.
- Catchment areas

Consultees would also be asked if they had any alternative suggestions that could be adopted that would address the issues facing the council in fulfilling its statutory duty of ensuring good quality school places.

Feedback from the informal consultation would be brought back to Cabinet for a decision on whether or not to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Proposal.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Children and Families Act 2014 placed legal duties on Local Authorities to identify and assess the special educational needs (SEN) of children and young people aged 0-25 for whom they are responsible. LAs become responsible for a child/young person in their area when they become aware that the child/young person has or may have SEN. They must then ensure that those children and young people receive a level of support which will help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.

Starting in May 2016, the government launched SEND inspections of local areas, specifically focussing on how an area meets the needs of children and young people with SEND across education, health and social care services. All LAs will be inspected over a five year period through a joint inspection from Ofsted and CQC (Care Quality Commission).

Cabinet 10 April 2018

The SEND Strategy details the strategic direction the council will take to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND through increasing capacity within special educational provision, supporting our mainstream schools to become more inclusive and increase collaboration and joint working practices between education, health and social care.

## **IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT**

<b>Policy:</b>	The consultation would be consistent with the Council's duty to provide sufficient and suitable places for all children in Northumberland.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Any proposals for the creation of additional capacity as a result of further consultation would be provided to Cabinet with the outcomes of such consultation, together with projected costs of any building works that would be required to support the creation of the additional places. The total estimated cost of the works to create the extension at Hexham Priory are £1.173m, while the estimated costs to make the Ashdale building fit for purpose is £1.917m. The Business Case attached in the Background Papers to this report provides further detail
<b>Human Resources:</b>	Some schools may need to employ additional staff should Cabinet approve proposals to increase places at schools at some point in the future
<b>Property</b>	Refer to 'Finance and value for money' above
<b>Equalities</b>	An Equalities Impact Assessment would be carried out concurrently with the consultation process, should it be approved.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	A full risk assessment would be carried out on the project should consultation be approved.
<b>Carbon Reduction</b>	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.

**Customer Considerations:** The proposals set out in this report are based upon the outcomes of the consultation on the Special Educational Needs & Disability Strategy and Capacity

**Consultation** This report has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and the Chief Legal Officer.

**Wards** All

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Business Case for extension to Hexham Priory School  
Business Case for addition of satellite site (Ashdale) to The Dales School, Blyth

### **Report sign off**

Finance Officer	SD
Monitoring Officer/Legal	LH
Human Resources	n/a
Procurement	n/a
I.T.	n/a
Executive DCS	CM
Portfolio Holder	WD

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Report Author Sue Aviston Head of School Organisation and Resources  
Sam Barron Head of SEND Strategy (01670) 622281  
Sue.Aviston@[Northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Aviston@Northumberland.gov.uk)  
[samantha.barron@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.barron@northumberland.gov.uk)

Cabinet 10 April 2018