



Consultation on Support for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and for Young People who need support to stay in education:

Summary of findings and next steps – February 2020

- 1 Last summer and autumn we consulted on proposals for:
 - a) Centrally Managed Services
 - b) Special Schools
 - c) Top up Funding
 - d) Targeted Funding
 - e) Post 16 Funding
 - f) Funding support to Partnerships of Schools
 - g) Joint commissioning of therapies
 - h) Joint commissioning of equipment, aids and adaptations
 - i) Alternative Provision (AP) and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)
- 2 We used various ways to ensure the Council obtained the views of key stakeholders including children and young people with additional needs and their families; providers of all phases and types of education; partner organisations and community support groups.
- 3 266 people responded to the online survey and over 100 people fed back their views through face-to-face discussions
- 4 The results of the consultation have identified that the majority of respondents are supportive of the Council's commitments and all but one of the proposals associated with the above nine areas of review.

The majority of respondents to the consultation were in favour of the Council adopting the following commitments:

- (a) To collectively support an education system within County Durham where inclusion of children and young people in their local schools is the norm, giving parents and carers confidence that their children's needs will be understood and met.
- (b) To offer a range of specialist learning provisions for some young people who have a high level of needs.
- (c) To make every effort to use all of the resources available to young people effectively and efficiently and to maintain spending within funding limits wherever possible.

- 5 **Centrally Managed Services** provided by Durham County Council include functions such as: support to nursery pupils and children with sensory and learning difficulties along with SEND management and support posts. It is proposed that the Council continue to provide these services in the future to ensure a consistent approach and quality of service but continue with extensive reviews to ensure value for money and a reduction in costs where possible. The majority of respondents to the consultation agreed with these proposals.
- 6 **Ten special schools** provide specialist teaching and support for children and young people with the most complex special education needs. The majority of respondents to the consultation were in favour of the proposals to review and extend the range of specialist places offered, so children can access services locally rather than attend high cost independent placements outside of the local area.
- 7 The ten special schools currently provide education to 1,315 young people at a forecast cost this year of £25.454 million. This works out at an average cost of £19,350 per place, £17,700 for generic special school places (1,027 young people) and £25,500 for social emotional and mental health school places (288 young people).
- 8 Most respondents to the consultation agreed with the proposals to jointly commission **children's therapies** through the Council working with schools and Clinical Commissioning Groups. Respondents were very positive about the proposed changes citing benefits to include the speeding up of service provision, improved access to services and a focus on understanding all the child's needs.

- 9 Work is also underway with the NHS to streamline the processes for the identification, assessment and purchasing of **auxiliary aids, equipment and adaptations** for children and young people which will make best use of resources and achieve better value for money. Most respondents to the consultation agreed to the proposals that additional funding is used to purchase specialist equipment (not normally available in school or other educational setting) to support children with significant needs; and that a new system is developed for storing and reusing equipment.
- 10 **Top up Funding** is provided to schools to meet an individual child or young person's SEND needs when this would cost more than the school's main budget. At present every school decides on the amount of extra funding they need for each child. This has resulted in differences in the amount of support a young person receives depending on the school's considerations and how the school completes an application and calculates the funding. The majority of respondents to the consultation agreed with that proposal for a 'banding system' to be developed and applied to Top up Funding to support schools in ensuring SEND needs are consistently and more appropriately met, and in a timely manner.
- 11 **Targeted Support Funding** is provided to help schools increase their main budget to help young people with SEND. The amount that a school receives is currently determined by a formula and does not require schools to provide evidence of whether they need more money or what the additional money will be used for. A large majority of respondents agreed with the Council's proposal to continue to support targeted funding. The majority of respondents also agreed with the Council's proposal to only provide Targeted Support Funding when a school applies for specific help and that the school's application will be required to meet a set of conditions that will be set in consultation with schools.
- 12 Our forecast spend on top up funding in maintained schools in 2019/20 is £7.085 million. This covers £5.938 million in primary schools and £1.147 million in secondary schools. This covers extra support to a total of 769 full time equivalent (FTE) young people at an average cost of £9,200 per FTE. The amounts vary at present from £1,000 to £35,000 support. Targeted support of £780,000 is also forecast to be provided across 83 schools.
- 13 Funding is also provided to the **Post 16 sector** to support the education costs of young people over 16 years of age, with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). This has created a new and growing demand in recent years and has proved difficult to forecast in advance. Work has been undertaken to develop a fair pricing model with the sector and this model has been welcomed by all main providers. Most respondents to

the consultation agreed with the proposal to roll out a fair pricing model to all Post 16 providers. Meanwhile a proposal to fund a three-day per week provision for Post 16 education over two years was not supported by the majority of respondents to the consultation and this will not currently be pursued.

- 14 In Durham, fifteen **Communities of Learning (CoL)** partnerships along with four Secondary Behaviour Partnerships and a Primary Behaviour Partnership exist to assist schools locally in providing support to children and young people with inclusion needs. It is proposed that we continue to support the work of these local partnerships with some targeted funding. Most respondents agreed with this proposal and agreed that the partnerships should be required to produce a business plan as part of an application process for funding and be required to report on the impact of the funding that has been allocated.
- 15 The **Woodlands Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)** supports permanently excluded pupils and those identified as close to permanent exclusion. The Woodlands is operating over capacity with many young people accessing off-site alternative provision, which is putting further pressures on funding. The Council's proposals include supporting more early intervention and therapeutic support and increase the number of young people back into school; and increasing the number of young people, particularly in years 7 and 8, to reintegrate quickly into mainstream or specialist schools from The Woodlands PRU. Most respondents to the consultation agreed to the proposal to devolve more resources for permanently excluded pupils to locality-based panels, and to reintegrate more permanently excluded children and young people into schools.
- 16 The PRU currently arrange education for 221 young people at a forecast cost this year of £5.5 million. This works out at an average cost of £24,900 per young person.
- 17 The Council's Cabinet approved the report and its recommendations when it met on 15 January 2020. A link to the report and an easy read guide is available on the Council's SEND Local Offer web pages [here](#).
- 18 A programme of work is now underway for these areas and regular updates will be provided including reports to the Schools Forum and an update report to the Council's Cabinet in Summer 2020.

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