

Southend-on-Sea City Council

Executive Director of Children and Public Health
to
Education Board

On
18 October 2022

Report prepared by:

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and
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**Agenda
Item No.**

Review of Inclusion across Southend-on-Sea Schools, Settings, and Services

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **To update the board on the work of the Southend Education Inclusion Task and Finish Advisory Group and emerging themes for the recommended spend of the annual £1M High Needs budget from 2022/23.**
- 1.2 **To update the board on the findings of the commissioned Rapid Review of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP)**

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the Alternative Provision Base Pilot as outlined in 5.5 onwards

3 Background

- 3.1 In June 2022, following the “Implementing the ambitions of the Green Paper on SEND” paper by the Director of Education and Early Years, Education Board agreed an annual ring-fenced sum of £1M from 2022/23 to increase opportunities for inclusion in the Southend area. The focus of the first years spend is for children of compulsory school age.
- 3.2 The Task and Finish Group has now met on three occasions since its inauguration in June 2022. The group consists of representatives from primary, secondary, special, and alternative provision schools. School representatives were identified from existing Education Board subgroups members. In addition, an Early Years representative, school SENCO and LA officers from Education and Social Care, along with representation from the Southend SEND Independent Forum (Parent/Carer group) and Health.

- 3.3 The purpose of the group is to consider the findings of the rapid review of SEND and alternative provision, and to advise and support the Council on:
- 3.3.1 Best use of the allocated funding to support inclusion and consider proposals contained in the SEND Green paper, with respect of supporting mainstream schools in meeting the needs of the majority of learners with additional needs, alongside their peers
 - 3.3.2 Prepare a costed spend and implementation plan for 2022/23
 - 3.3.3 To determine clear timescales and impact measures for each of the proposals contained in the implementation plan, and then to monitor progress against the plan
 - 3.3.4 To play a lead role in any required recruitment or procurement exercises relating to the proposals
 - 3.3.5 To play a lead advocating role in championing the initiatives within the plan with all education leaders, including rapid consultation with education leaders
 - 3.3.6 Over time, to also advise on potential capital provision in relation to inclusion/SEND agenda
- 3.4 Chow Solutions were commissioned to undertake a four-month rapid review of Inclusion, specifically children and young people accessing Alternative Provision in Southend including Outreach and services to provide provision where children are unable to attend school due to health reasons. The final report outlining its findings and recommendations was shared with the Task and Finish Group at their last meeting on 7th October 2022.

4 Current themes and findings

- 4.1.1 The Task and Finish Group has concentrated its focus on the following themes which were identified and agreed at the initial meeting: Current alternative provision options available locally and potential gaps or needs; The effectiveness of the SEND graduated response in relation to early identification and intervention; How schools, pupils and their families can be better supported by the LA and other external services to enable children and young people with SEND to be educated successfully alongside peers in a mainstream school; To explore practise, service provision and modelling, and training to meet the growing social, emotional, mental health, anxiety and related medical needs of children and young people in Southend.
- 4.2 In addition, the rapid review of Inclusion identified four core elements of improvement: Mapping alternative provision: provision, access, and the movement of pupils; Structural and strategic issues; Improvements to processes and systems; Commissioning of relevance to alternative provision, which also reinforce the initial themes of the group.
- 4.3 **Mapping alternative provision: provision, access, and the movement of pupils**
- 4.3.1 It was identified that the number of Southend pupils moving from mainstream to alternative provision due to permanent exclusion or reaching the point of permanent exclusion (APEX) was high.

- 4.3.2 For the majority of those moved, over 80% were found to have identified special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
- 4.3.3 There appears to be a rapid escalation for pupils permanently excluded or those reaching APEX with more than half of these children not having SEND identified until accessing alternative provision; and the majority not having had previous external interventions through outreach services prior to exclusion.
- 4.3.4 There is a gap in flexible, part-time, time-limited group interventions either from outreach services within mainstream schools or within alternative provisions.
- 4.3.5 There is a gap in alternative options to transitions into post 16 provisions.

4.4 **Structural and strategic issues**

- 4.4.1 There is limited ownership and collaborative working of a shared set of values and vision for inclusion across local schools, settings, and services.
- 4.4.2 Greater work is needed to ensure an effective graduated response of SEND, particularly earlier identification at SEND support for the right support, in the right place at the right time.

4.5 **Improvements to processes and systems**

- 4.5.1 Greater analysis is needed of the impact and effectiveness of pupils transitioning back to mainstream from alternative provision and increased opportunities for pupils to reintegrate back to mainstream from special schools or resource bases.
- 4.5.2 Greater analysis needed of the impact and effectiveness of all outreach services, including the role of alternative provisions and Autism Resource Bases in providing professional advice, and professional development for other mainstream schools.
- 4.5.3 There is a current gap for pupils transitioning from primary autism resource bases (ARB) into an appropriate secondary ARB.

4.6 **Commissioning of relevance to alternative provision**

- 4.6.1 Further develop a comprehensive suite of tools for children with social, emotional, and mental health needs (SEMH) and ensure consistency in identification, language, and practice.
- 4.6.2 Review commissioned alternative provision pathways to increase the number of places and earlier opportunities for flexible, part-time alternative provision for primary and secondary school pupils.
- 4.7 Review alternative provision pathways in alternative provision where reintegration isn't deemed in the child's best interests to return to mainstream and increase alternative provision options for registered provisions.

5 Focus for the next half term

- 5.1 To identify the commissioned activities and spend, the group needs to understand the wider needs of the local community along with the findings of the rapid review. As such, the following rapid consultations will occur:
 - 5.1.1 Consulting the views of all schools (primary, secondary, special, and alternative provision schools). Using the findings from the rapid review, a set of eight questions has been formed to gain schools views on the needs of the local area and required investment from the one-year funding.
 - 5.1.2 It asks the views of schools on further investment in the type of services for children, families, and schools; developing existing or new alternative provisions, developing new or existing specialist SEND provisions, and developing specialist training and resources for schools.
 - 5.1.3 The survey will go out to schools on Friday 14th October 2022 for approximately two weeks (not including the Southend published half term week).
 - 5.1.4 Southend SEND Independent (Parent/Carer) Forum (SIF), will also consult with parents on the needs of the local area and where investment is needed to better meet the needs of children with SEND in Southend.
 - 5.1.5 This will also be a rapid consultation commencing on Friday 14th October 2022 for approximately three weeks. This is due to conclude on Friday 4th November 2022 (including the Southend published half term week). Following this consultation, results will be collated and analysed by members of SIF. A report on the findings will be available, week commencing 21st November 2022.
 - 5.1.6 In addition to schools and parents, the views of Southend's statutory children's services such as social care, youth offending and health are asked through the membership representation, to seek the views of services regarding what provisions, resources and services are needed to ensure a more inclusive Southend for children with SEND and improve earlier identification and outcomes for children.
- 5.2 The Task and Finish Group recognised the findings of the rapid review regarding the need for additional alternative provision pathways in the town to respond to needs earlier and allow for a more flexible approach to alternative provision.
- 5.3 SSIF also shared early views of parents where there is a gap for those children and young people where a return to mainstream or special school provision is not deemed to be in the best interest of the child, and limited provision options for those requiring Education other than at School (EOTAS).
- 5.4 The Council has also been approached by two Southend school multi academy trusts (MAT) to make an application for an Alternative Provision Free School.
- 5.5 The Council has declined any such partnership for this round of alternative provision free schools until the work of the Task and Finish Group has been finalised in identifying the provision needs of the local area. The group has

instead supported a proposal to pilot interim provision bases within existing schools and provisions within the town.

- 5.6 The group will write to all registered settings in the area asking for expressions of interest in operating an alternative provision base within their school or setting during the academic year 2023/24 (or earlier if able). Schools or trusts can put in an expression of interest on their own or by joining with another provision or school as part of their interest.
- 5.7 Once initial expressions of interest are received, a subgroup will be formed with partners who do not have a conflict of interest to create the specifications and scope, along with performance indicators and outcomes framework using the rapid review findings and the analysis of the different consultations with schools, parent/carers and partners.
- 5.8 It is aimed that after the shortlisting of business cases and interview rounds by the subgroup; successful schools, trusts and/or provisions will be confirmed in January 2023 and no later than February half term 2023.
- 5.9 The full timeline for the process will be shared at the November 2022 Task and Finish Group and as soon as the subgroup has been formed and specifications and scope identified by the subgroup, those expressing an interest will be shared the details to provide a more informed and comprehensive business case to the group.
- 5.10 The pilot will be funded through the Education Board's allocated and unspent £700,000 additional alternative provision pathways and does not form part of the £1,000,000 budget. The projects will not have allocated capital funding, due to this being a pilot.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Task and Finish Group will be able to report to the Vulnerable Learners and Resource Subgroups on the proposed 2022/23 spend of the Inclusion Review once the consultations have been fully analysed. This should identify the areas and focus of spend and allow the group to commence on any commissioning of services, resources, and training.
- 6.2 The alternative provision pilot will inform the group and Education Board of future long-term commitments for alternative provision within Southend and allow the group to move to a successful pathway/s for the provision of additional alternative provision places within the local area, whether this be through existing alternative provision schools, new alternative provision bases within mainstream or special schools, or support the application for a new alternative provision free school.
- 6.3 Importantly, the areas identified through the themes and initial findings of the Task and Finish Group, rapid review and from the analysis of the surveys from schools, parents/carers and services must also align to the Southend SEND Strategy 2022-2025.

- 6.4 It is, therefore, helpful to note that these early findings already align to three of following priorities within the strategy:
- 6.4.1 Transitions: Children and young people are prepared and supported to thrive at each change in their lives, helping them to feel secure and confident.
 - 6.4.2 Early Intervention: Identification, assessment and effective support are provided at the earliest opportunity.
 - 6.4.3 Good mental health and wellbeing: children and young people are provided with the best chance to achieve positive mental health, be happy and thrive within their family, education, and social lives, develop their potential, build strong relationships, and contribute to their community.
 - 6.4.4 The Task and Finish Group will provide a further report to the Education Board at the December 2022 meeting. This report will outline the areas in which the initial £1M High Needs spend will be allocated. Mapped against impact measures, to evidence effective use of funds.