

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Attainment Sub Committee

10 December 2014

SUBJECT:	The Delivery of Alternative Education Provision
WARD/S AFFECTED:	All
REPORT OF:	Director of Children's Services
KEY DECISION?	No

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information about how the Council will be taking forward its provision for alternative education (AP).
- 1.2 The report outlines the outcome of a review of alternative education provision, its recommendations and outlines the details of a further consultation about options for the future provision of alternative education provision at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 In October 2013 Wirral commissioned RBMM Education Ltd to carry out a strategic review of the delivery of alternative provision for secondary aged pupils aged 11 to 16. The purpose of the review was to consider how the existing service, systems, policies and processes needed to develop in the future. The review was to take account of the broader national policy context, in particular the changing role of the Council and projected local needs.
- 2.2 This report makes reference to the Wirral Pupil Referral Unit and the need to develop an overall strategy for AP which represents better value for money.
- 2.3 Taking into account the national context and the local context there is a need to revise the provision on Wirral and the report identified a number of recommendations about the way forward.
- 2.4 In response to the recommendations the Council established a working group of senior officers and school head teachers to discuss and agree a way forward. This group, Wirral Alternative Provision Strategy Group (WAPSG) formally established itself to provide a forum for informed discussion on the implementation of the recommendations from the strategic review of alternative provision taking into account statutory guidance.
- 2.5 This strategic group focussed on developing a continuum of provision that encompasses the following features:

- a) A commitment to early intervention and re-integration
- b) An alternative provision offer that is developed by involving schools, learners and their families
- c) A robust referral process and commissioning process, ensuring effective data collection and information exchange and developing partnership working
- d) Linking referral processes with multi agency panels or inclusion forums that provide an overview of a range of local provision and a mechanism for matching that with needs and prioritizing where necessary
- e) The engagement of schools at all stages of the commissioning and referral process
- f) A curriculum offer that prioritises academic achievement, especially in English and maths
- f) A personalised approach through a range of pathways at each key stage
- g) Ensuring that accreditation is meaningful, relevant and transferable to enable young people to move forward successfully into post 16 provision or employment with training

2.6 The strategic group carried out a survey of high schools about their use of alternative provision in the Summer Term 2014 and this in turn raised a number of issues which needs to be addressed. These issues include the need for:

- a) Clarity regarding the purpose of the existing AP offer
- b) Greater consistency in school approaches to quality assurance
- c) More early intervention programmes
- d) More reintegration and transition support for pupils
- e) Bespoke/personalised pathways for pupils
- f) An AP directory to include local AP offer.

2.7 As the response to the survey in the Summer Term 2014 was limited a further data collection exercise is taking place with schools in the Autumn Term 2014 and this will be further reported on in the Spring Term 2015.

2.8 In response to the recommendations of the Strategic Review and the findings of the strategic group it was agreed to carry out a consultation with schools and key partners to determine the most appropriate model for the provision of alternative education provision. It is intended to commence this consultation with schools and partners before Christmas 2014 until the half term of the Spring Term 2015 to allow schools, governors and partners an opportunity to look at the proposed models put forward for consideration. A copy of the consultation document, which sets out the detail of the proposed models, will be emailed to members of the Attainment Sub Committee at the same time it is sent to schools and partners, for information.

2.9 In summary, the consultation puts forward three models for AP delivery for consideration.

- The first model proposes that the existing Pupil Referral Unit which is soon to become an academy (sponsored by the Sefton Education Trust), becomes a hub of delivery, not only for those pupils permanently excluded from school but as a commissioning agent for additional provision for their pupils and for other school pupils too.

- The second model devolves the responsibility to purchase AP for their pupils, to school partnerships. The Pupil Referral Unit as an academy would continue to support pupils permanently excluded from school or at risk of permanent exclusion.
- The third model devolves a greater responsibility to the Council to directly commission AP. Again this recognises the continuance of the PRU as an academy early in the New Year.

2.10 The outcome of the consultation will be reported to Members together with formal proposals about future provision.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to work in partnership with schools to provide alternative education for pupils permanently excluded from school and those at risk of permanent exclusion from school. Both the Council and schools have a statutory responsibility to ensure that alternative providers are appropriately qualified to comply with those standards expected to provide suitable education for children and young people and that the appropriate registrations are in place. Although some providers are compliant with statutory standards not all are fully compliant. This work will ensure that the commissioning arrangements in the future by both the Council and schools will ensure that suitable educational providers are identified to meet children and young people's needs.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 A range of options are included within the consultation document.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 The consultation will commence in the first week of December 2014 and end at half term in the Spring Term 2015. Key Council services, schools, governors and those bodies represented by the Children's Trust and Members will be consulted.

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

6.1 None

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 Some of these groups, may in future, become providers of alternative education.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 Alternative Provision is part of high needs provision and is funded from within the Schools Budget. It is not Council funded. There are 80 places provided at each of the Pupil Referral Unit and Wirral Hospital School. The combined cost of this provision at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is £2.5m a year. In addition, home schools will provide additional resources for a number of pupils, this is usually linked to pupil funding.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to make suitable education provision for pupils permanently excluded from school.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-april-2014/eias-families-wellbeing>

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None identified.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None identified.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 To note the contents of this report

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 The Council has a responsibility to review its arrangements for the provision of suitable alternative education. This work will ensure a greater confidence for parents, pupils and schools in the quality and quantity of alternative education in the future.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL

BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY

Briefing Note	Date

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SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date