

Review of High Needs SEN in Wirral

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Introduction

Wirral is committed to ensuring that there is sufficient, high quality Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision to meet the needs of Wirral's children and young people with complex educational needs. This commitment is outlined in Wirral's Children and Families strategy which states that 'we will develop ambitious and inclusive plans to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs and / or disabilities, using their plans and national best practice to inform our local approach to commissioning school places.'

In light of the Council's pledge and its statutory duty to review school provision to ensure that it is responsive to needs a review was undertaken. The review took place from May to December 2017.

Key Principles

Children and young people with SEND require high quality provision that enables them to make good progress towards meeting their outcomes. Wirral recognises that if life chances are to be improved, inclusive opportunities have to be promoted and a continuum of provision is required.

Wirral undertook a review of SEND provision to explore the current and the future requirements for specialist places within the authority. The review was asked to focus on how many specialist places will be required given recent trends and where such provision should be located. It was also asked to examine the numbers accessing non-maintained provision and how this number could be managed to ensure that Wirral used its resources in an efficient way.

The education system is shifting nationally to more of a school-led system and on Wirral school to school support is provided through the Locality Boards. As the population of SEND is significant in all schools the Local Authority needs to support school leaders in building their own capacity for the local leadership of SEND. Any new resource base or other provision needs to be strategically located and should have the capacity to offer SEND support to schools within their locality.

Purpose of the Review

1. The review will provide direction for the Local Authority to secure effective inclusive provision for children and young people and to map out how specialist provision should be shaped to achieve the 2020 vision. It will ensure that there is a continuum of high quality local provision for young children and young people from 0-25 years of age with special educational needs.
2. The review will ensure that the LA has sustainable provision that makes best use of the Wirral pound and improves educational attainment for SEND pupils. It will explore integrated approaches to supporting these pupils.
3. The desired outcome of this review are that

- Provision will continue to meet needs over the medium term
- Current provision across mainstream and specialist setting will improve for children with special educational needs and disability
- More SEND pupils will be educated in their local mainstream school with appropriate levels of support and that the achievement gap for this group will be closed.
- The redesign of specialist provision will result in more efficient and effective use of resources.

1.0 Key Findings:

Wirral continues to have high levels of children and young people with Statements of SEN/Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in addition to having a high proportion of children identified as needing SEN Support. These numbers are higher than the average of our statistical neighbours and of England. There is a perception that an application for an Education Health Care Needs Assessment guarantees that needs will be met and that these needs may be best met in the special school sector.

As at October 2017 there were 1146 children and young people on roll at one of ten special schools, the hospital school and the PRU. This number has increased from 983 in 2007, an increase of 17%. There are 210 children and young people with SEND in Resource Base Provision. All provision is full or nearly full at primary with some capacity at secondary.

The special school population is growing well in excess of the increase in birth rate. Some of the reasons may include improved medical care, increased diagnosis of primary and secondary need and the impact of the standards agenda adversely affecting inclusive practice in mainstream schools. The pressure in the special schools is SEMH (primary), ASC (primary/ secondary), MLD (secondary) and SLD (primary/ secondary).

Special schools in Wirral cannot collectively meet the needs or the demands of all Wirral children with SEND at the current time, as nearly all schools are at capacity. There is no appetite by the Local Authority to expand the special school sector as the resources in terms of capital investment and revenue funding do not support it. There is a need therefore to invest in the wider range of provision including mainstream provision and Resource Bases. School leaders and families need to develop more confidence that children's needs can be met and positive outcomes achieved in inclusive environments and that children benefit from being part of their local community.

However, the increase of places in Resource bases and financial support for children with SEND in their local mainstream school can only be viable if a number of places are decommissioned in the special school sector or in the specialist sector where there is limited take up.

2.0 Overall Financial Picture:

Funding for High Needs is through the Schools Budget and a new national funding formula. In 2018-19 Wirral will receive £35.2m in total to support SEND provision in Early Years, schools and colleges.

The proposed changes that are described in this phase of the review will be met from the High Needs Budget. However although there are additional resources allocated to Wirral these are unlikely to be sufficient by themselves in the short term. There is a need for an additional financial commitment for a transitional period which will pump prime the changes that are being considered.

New funding regulations allow for the consideration of a top slice of up to 0.5% from School Budgets which can be added to the High Needs Budget. This amount is the equivalent of £1m per annum.

3.0 Mainstream Schools

There is strong evidence of high quality learning experiences being offered to children with SEND by mainstream schools. This is reflected in Ofsted reports and the outcomes achieved by this group of children. However, for some parents, there is a perception that if children are identified as requiring SEND Support then needs may be better met in the specialist/ special school sector. For this small group of parents confidence in mainstream provision needs to be strengthened.

Alongside this there is a need to develop the capacity of mainstream schools to meet a wider range of learning needs. Wirral is committed to investing in services and mainstream provision that will prevent children from requiring more costly packages later in life. It acknowledges that support will be required as schools balance meeting the needs of all children with the pressure to improve standards alongside the level of resources that are delegated directly to schools. There is a need for further conversations with the mainstream sector about sufficiency requirements to ensure a broad continuum of provision is developed to meet the need of children with SEN.

To ensure that Wirral Children with SEND have the same opportunities of inclusive education as that of Statistical Neighbours and of England, a wide range of training and SEND support is being developed. These changes follow feedback from schools and will specifically focus on the areas of ASC and SEMH. A newly formed school intervention team will support the work of the educational psychologists and will utilise the expertise of the special school sector. Clinical psychologists will form part of this specialist team.

Mainstream Schools will be encouraged to fully utilise their Element 2 funding to support pupils identified as requiring SEND Support. Should additional funding be required schools should apply for Pupil Funding Agreements (PFA's).

There are also a growing number of F2 children who are not ready for mainstream provision. This group of children require a smaller more nurturing environment in which more detailed assessments can take place prior to them being put forward for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment. A large proportion of these children may have Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Schools have expressed an appetite for being able to purchase an assessment place from an early years setting for these children who are deemed as not ready for school. These places would ensure that needs can be fully assessed and effective interventions and strategies be put in place prior to transition into mainstream primary settings.

The Local Authority should consider

- Creating 24 additional places for young children F2-Y1 who will benefit from inclusive mainstream schooling delivered in a small nurturing environment. They are those children

who are not ready for school and have or may have SEND. This change will enhance existing provision and ensure that there is a sufficient supply of places in specialist provision in Wirral.

3.1 Financial Implications

There are no additional costs associated with the establishment of the School Intervention Team

The LA will carefully monitor the costs associated with the PFA and ensure that all spend is carefully monitored and reviewed.

It is anticipated that the 24 places in early years settings will be purchased by mainstream schools from their delegated budgets.

4.0 Specialist Provision

The Resource Bases are situated in a range of Primary and Secondary Schools. They are recognised as offering small group provision with teaching delivered by highly skilled practitioners. They are particularly popular with parents as they offer a range of inclusive opportunities and provide the children with the opportunity to engage with a wide cohort of children. However, the numbers of places in the Resource Bases is no longer sufficient for the growing number of children being identified as benefitting from such provision. Examining current demands and trends additional capacity will have to be developed.

Additional difficulties have been created as Resource Base provision has developed at differing rates for primary and secondary schools. The current number of ASC places in resource bases at primary is 56 whereas in secondary the number of available places is 35. For MLD the number in resource bases at primary is 36, whereas in secondary the number of available places is 50. The discrepancy between primary and secondary places has resulted in a number of children leaving ASC primary resource bases and entering a special secondary school as provision is not mirrored. For the MLD population there have not been sufficient places in primary resulting in a number of children entering the special school sector whose needs may have been better served in a Resource Base. The evidence shows that if a child is in a Special Primary School there is limited take up for Secondary Resource Base provision. This has resulted in there being unfilled Secondary Resource provision.

There is effective support in Key Stage 1 for those children who have SEMH. There are currently 16 places in two mainstream schools and there is a commitment to effectively support these children at a very young age and reintegrate them into mainstream provision for Key Stage 2. However, for a small number this is not possible and this cohort enters the Primary SEMH school. It may be more appropriate for provision to continue in a Resource Base in a mainstream school, allowing the primary SEMH school to cater for those with the highest level of need.

A number of children have been identified by schools as having SEMH who struggle considerably in year 5 to year 6. This group of children find it difficult to effectively transition into mainstream secondary school and require a smaller setting for year 5 to year 7/8. The establishment of a SEMH

base for year 5-year 8 pupils in a secondary school would ensure that they can effectively transition into mainstream secondary provision at some point in the future.

The Local Authority should consider

- Increasing ASC Resource Base provision by an additional 8 places at primary and by an additional 20 at secondary. The provision at secondary will need to be continually reviewed to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in light of the primary numbers coming through.
- Increasing the number of MLD Resource Provision by an additional 16 places at primary and by an additional 10 at secondary. The provision at secondary will need to be continually reviewed to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in light of the primary numbers coming through.
- Create two Resource Base provisions of 10 places each for SEMH primary pupils.
- Create a year 5-year 8 Resource base of 8 places in a secondary school for SEMH pupils.

4.1 Financial Implications

- Increase Primary ASC Resource Base Provision by 8 places : £96,000
- Increase Secondary ASC Resource Base Provision by 20 places : £260,000
- Increase Primary MLD Resource Base Provision by 16 places : £96,000
- Increase Secondary MLD Resource Base Provision by 16 places : £96,000
- Create Primary SEMH Resource Base Provision by 20 places : £240,000
- Create year 5-year 8 SEMH Resource Base Provision by 8 places : £96,000

Full year costs of £884,000.

This can only be implemented in the short term through a top slice of school budgets. In the longer term funding would be through a reduction in places in special school provision.

5.0 Special School Provision

There are currently 10 special schools on Wirral, 5 at primary and 5 at secondary. In addition there is a Hospital School and a Pupil Referral Unit. All of the special schools and the Hospital School are recognised as good or outstanding and each one offers high quality teaching and learning opportunities for its population. The range of need catered for includes SpLD, MLD, ASD, SEMH, PMLD and SLD. The latter is referred to as Complex Learning Difficulty on the Wirral.

All special school provision for SpLD, MLD, ASD, PMLD and SLD is full or over numbers (October 2017 census). SEMH is full at primary and there are some spaces at secondary.

Wirral's figures for those attending special schools are very different to the England average.

SpLD

- 3.7% with SpLD attend a special school compared to England average of 1.4%. This number is decreasing but still considerably higher than the England average. However, the high percentage relates to those predominately in Year 5 and 6 of Orrets Meadow.

- Orrets Meadow has a total school population of 77; distribution is 40 SpLD, 36 ASC. It currently has 36 children with SpLD in years 4, 5 and 6. In 2020, there will be 15 pupils comprising of 4 pupils with SpLD and 7 ASC pupils.

MLD

- 12.55% with MLD attend a mainstream school compared to England average of 23.65%. Whilst the number of primary children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) accessing special school provision has started to decrease, the number of secondary children with MLD attending special school provision is not decreasing at the same pace. This is in part due to the numbers requesting provision from primary resource provision being high.
- Hayfield has a total school population of 128; distribution is 47 MLD, 81 ASC. It currently has 26 children with MLD in years 4, 5 and 6. In 2020, there will be 67 pupils comprising of 21 MLD pupils and 46 ASC pupils.
- Clare Mount has a total school population of 229; distribution is 136 pupils with MLD and 93 ASC pupils. It currently has 47 children with MLD in years 12, 13 and 14. In 2020, there will be 168 pupils comprising of 89 pupils with MLD and 79 ASC pupils.

SEMH

- 15.2% with SEMH attend a special school compared to England average of 12.5%. The primary SEMH school Gilbrook is over numbers with increased pressure on places. The two secondary schools, Kilgarth and The Observatory have a small number of vacant places.

SLD

- The number of children being identified as having Severe Learning Difficulties is increasing and additional capacity will have to be sourced. By 2020, an additional 20 primary places will be required and 22 secondary places.

Inclusion

- Whilst the Local Authority has distributed a substantial budget to promote inclusion into mainstream provision, the number of children receiving inclusive packages is small. Very few children transfer from the special school to either a Resource Base or a mainstream school.

Independent Sector

- Despite a large special school provision in Wirral, there are still a significant number of children with an EHCP placed in the Independent Sector. Some of these placements are because of breakdown whereas others are there because of educational break down. There is a lack of places available to meet current and future demand in our Special Schools for those with very complex and challenging needs. Capacity needs to be developed within Wirral special schools for this population with Complex Learning Difficulties and Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH).

The Local Authority should consider

SpLD

- Ensuring that children with SpLD, unless needs are extremely complex, have their needs met in the mainstream sector. Orrets should be re-designated as a primary school for ASD retaining the staff skills in SpLD through the well-respected Orrets Meadow outreach intervention work.
- Orrets should be a 60 place ASC school by 2020, admitting 14 ASC pupils in 2018, 2019, 2020, bringing total population to 57. This reduction in numbers will allow the special school to focus on pupils with more complex needs, including ASD and challenging behaviour.

MLD

- Working with school leaders and parents to ensure that children who have MLD have their needs effectively met either within primary or secondary Resource Base provision or within the primary or secondary mainstream sector. This piece of work will ensure that primary provision is mirrored at secondary. Examining the profile of the pupils requiring special school provision at Primary a maximum of 10 MLD places will be required in special secondary provision. The lifelong opportunities for these children if attending an inclusive mainstream secondary school will be enhanced.
- Reduction in pupil population in both schools will allow the schools to focus on pupils with more complex needs, including ASD and challenging behaviour.
- Hayfield should be a 90 place ASC school by 2020, admitting 10 ASC pupils in 2018, 2019, 2020, bringing total population to 91.
- Clare Mount should be a 190 place ASC School by 2020. This is in light of the Secondary ASC/ MLD Resource Base Provision being established. This number should continue to reduce after 2020 as the intake reduces.
- From 2018 the maximum number of places commissioned by the LA in Clare Mount for years 12, 13 and 14 will be 30 places across the three year groups for those with the most complex needs.
- Building the confidence of the families of MLD children in local college provision and ensuring that the benefits of inclusive college post 16 provision is discussed at the Year 9 Annual Review.

SEMH

- Reduce the number of pupils in Gilbrook to 45, allowing them to have the facilities to cater for the most complex pupils.

SLD

- Increasing places at the 4 SLD schools in light of the growing numbers and forward planning for the considerable increase in numbers by 2020 of 20 SLD places in primary and 22 in secondary.

Inclusion

- Carefully monitoring the inclusive packages that children from the special schools are accessing and the impact that these are having.

- Additional work is required to develop flexible pathways to enable children and young people access the right provision and services to meet their individual needs at different stages. There is a substantial piece of work to be done around placement step down, as there is little evidence of this happening on Wirral.

Independent Sector

- Developing the capacity within the special school sector to ensure that fewer children with SEMH attend out of borough placements for educational reasons.

5.1 Financial Implications

By 2020

SpLD

- Re-designate Orrets Meadow as a 60 place ASC School. Population in 2020 will be 56 ASC and 4 SpLD places.
- Place saving x 10 = £100,000. Top up saving for SpLD 36 Places = £39,600. Saving £139,600
- Top up cost for 56 ASC Pupils of which 20 are additional (Additional cost is 20 x £6,100 = £122,000).

Total reduction £17,600

MLD

- Re-designate Hayfield as a 90 place ASC School. Population in 2020 will be 69 ASC and 21 MLD places.
- Place saving x 30 = £300,000. Top up saving for MLD 26 Places = £28,600. Top up saving for reduction in ASC Population of 12 pupils = £73,200

Reduction £401,800

- Re-designate Clare Mount as a 190 place ASC School. Population in 2020 will be 101 ASC and 89 MLD places.
- Place saving x 20 = £200,000. Top up saving for MLD 47 Places = £51,700. Additional spend for increase in ASC numbers of 8 = £48,800 Saving £202,900

Total reduction £604,700

SEMH

- Reduce the place numbers in Gilbrook to 45.
- Place saving x 10 +£100,000. Top up saving for 10 SEMH places = £671,000 Saving £171,000
- Where possible the number of children with SEMH in out of borough placements with placements being provided by the special school sector.

Total reduction £171,700

SLD

- Create an additional 20 SLD places in primary and 22 in secondary by 2020.
- Cost £420,000 place funding +Top Up £340,200

Total Increase £760,200

5.2 Overall Financial Summary

	Cost	Budget Reduction
Resource Base Provision	£884,000	
Special School SpLD		£17,600
Special School MLD		£604,700
Special School SEMH		£171,000
Special School SLD	£760,200	
	£1,644,200	£793,300
Net Increase of Budget Allocation	£850,900	

The introduction of the new National Funding Formula for High Needs indicates an increase in funding for 2019-2020 of £900,000. The Review anticipates that this and future allocations will be sufficient to meet increased demand in SLD and other areas within High Needs.

6.0 Summary of Recommendations:

- To top slice the Schools Budget by ½ % and increase the High Needs budget for a 2 year period to enable changes to take place and become embedded.
- Ensure that EHCP are issued for those children with the highest need.
- Promote Pupil Funding Agreement (PFAs) where appropriate. Work with paediatricians and schools to promote PFAs and encourage consideration of local mainstream inclusion bases where appropriate, e.g. for MLD. Manage parental expectation through positive promotion of mainstream schools and of mainstream inclusion bases.
- Inclusion and Local provision – increase and fully utilise the number of base places available in mainstream schools, particularly Birkenhead and Wallasey.

In September 2018:

- Ensure that all secondary base provision is fully utilised-19 unfilled places
- Create 24 additional places for young children F2-Y1 who will benefit from inclusive mainstream schooling delivered in a small nurturing environment
- Establish MLD primary base (preferably in Wallasey Area) 16 places
- Establish ASD primary base (preferably in Wallasey Area) 8 places
- Establish 2 SEMH primary bases (preferably in Birkenhead Area and Bromborough Area) 10 places each
- Establish Year 5/Year 6 base in a secondary school for SEMH (8 places)

In September 2019:

- Establish MLD secondary base (preferably in Wallasey Area) 16 places
- Establish ASD secondary base (preferably in Wallasey Area) 20 places
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In September 2020

- Re-designate Orrets Meadow as a 60 place ASC School.
- Re-designate Hayfield as a 90 place ASC School.
- Re-designate Clare Mount as a 190 place ASC School.
- Reduce the place numbers in Gilbrook to 45.
- Create an additional 20 SLD places in primary CLD schools and 22 in secondary CLD schools.

Further Pieces of Work Required

- Further piece of work to be undertaken regarding post 16 provision and sufficiency of places.
- Further piece of work to be undertaken regarding language base provision and the effective deployment of Speech and Language therapists.