

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

31 January 2023

Subject: Extension of the Wiltshire Special Educational Needs and Inclusion (SEND&I) Strategy for a period of 12 months

Cabinet Member: Cllr Jane Davies – Cabinet Member for Adult Social care, SEND and Inclusion

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

Wiltshire Council has a Wiltshire Special Educational Needs and Inclusion (SEND&I) strategy which was co-produced with Wiltshire young people and their families and published in 2020. The Strategy details the areas of priority in relation to SEND&I in Wiltshire and outlines the activities and developments needed to ensure progress in these priority areas.

The current strategy period is for three years, from 2020 until 2023 which means that a new strategy should be made available in the calendar year of 2023.

An extension is requested for the current SEND&I Strategy and a new timetable for renewal presented.

Proposal(s)

1. That an extension of a year is agreed for the current Wiltshire SEND&I strategy, due to the delay from COVID in adopting the current strategy document, the associated delay in undertaking some elements of identified activity and the developments associated with the Government Green Paper (published for consultation Summer 2022).
2. Co-production activity for the next Wiltshire SEND&I strategy to commence in Autumn 2023 with a finalised strategy available in Summer 2024 and shared with Health and Wellbeing Board for approval as soon after completion as possible.

Reason for Proposal(s)

The process of writing a SEND&I strategy has a requirement for all elements to be co-produced with key stakeholders including partners in health and social care and local community representatives. A key tenet of a SEND strategy is also co-production from the very earliest stage with families and children and young people.

The COVID pandemic resulted in a delay to the SEND&I Strategy being presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board for approval. It was shared and discussed with this group on 24th September 2020. The pandemic did not result in a delay in all priority areas of the strategy but there are activities which have had to be amended to take account of challenges relevant to the pandemic.

A Green Paper 'Right Support, Right Place, Right Time' was published for consultation in the summer of 2022 which detailed proposed changes to local area arrangements for SEND, including the formation of a local area board. Consultation on this paper has now closed and we await further detail on the shape of these proposals in the future. This means that there are some key areas about which at the current time we remain unclear.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to highlight the challenges associated with renewal of the Wiltshire SEND&I Strategy within the previously agreed timeframe. The current strategy is for a three year period, running from 2020 to 2023.

The report seeks an extension for the current strategy of one year, with a renewed strategy to be produced by Summer 2024.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. This proposal is relevant to the following guiding themes outlined in the business plan: we live well together; we get the best start in life; we have the right skills to prosper.

Background

3. This proposal is being brought to cabinet for consideration as a key decision on the basis of point 4.2.7 in the key decision guidance, noting the strategic sensitivity of SEND.

Wiltshire Council is required to have a published strategy in relation to SEND. Wiltshire has a SEND&I strategy which was produced in early 2020 following a period of engagement and coproduction with a wide range of stakeholders, including young people with SEND and their families during 2019. The process of coproduction is, by its nature, time intensive and requires ongoing engagement with stakeholders to ensure that the final document reflects effectively what has been shared.

The pandemic did not result in a delay in all priority areas of the strategy but there are activities which have had to be amended to take account of challenges relevant to the pandemic, in response to the post pandemic landscape within schools and settings. The Wiltshire SEND&I strategy was shared and approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2020, so has been in place for a little over two years.

The Government green paper 'Right Support, Right Place, Right Time' made a number of proposals to strengthen SEND practice and support for young people and families. Some of these proposals relate to developments which would necessitate work across the local area, including the development of a local area board. These changes would need to be incorporated into the next SEND strategy document.

Main Considerations for the Council

4. The Council is required to have a strategy document which details the key areas of development and activity in the area of SEND and Inclusion which have been identified. This should be co-produced with stakeholders.
5. During the extension year, the local area will continue its unwavering work to create an environment where:

“All children and young people with SEND and their families will have a voice that is heard. They will know how to access, and be able to access the joined-up support they need to thrive in their communities, to enjoy life and reach their full potential”

6. Over the next year, additional school places will be provided through the opening of SAIL School in Salisbury, Silverwood School in Rowde and the development of resource bases in selected secondary schools across the county. There will be enhanced engagement with children and young people through the SEND Pioneer Programme which ensures grassroots involvement in developing, designing, implementing, and evaluating what works for them. It will give children and young people with SEND a strong voice, influencing health and social care services that will have a direct impact on their lives as well as helping shape their communities into positive and inclusive spaces. The Ordinarily Available Provision for all learners (OPAL) will be adopted by all schools to develop a consistent approach across education settings for those with additional learning needs.
7. The proposal does not require formal consultation.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

6. The proposal is not subject to overview and scrutiny.

Safeguarding Implications

8. There are no identified safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

9. There are no identified public health implications.

Procurement Implications

10. There are no identified procurement implications.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

11. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken in relation to this proposal.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

12. There are no environmental or climate change considerations identified for this proposal.

Workforce Implications

13. There are no workforce implications associated with this proposal.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

14. If a decision is not taken to delay the next iteration of the strategy the resultant document is unlikely to be produced with sufficient reference to the developments from the Green Paper. Subsequent developments from the process of the Green Paper becoming legislative will also not be captured in a strategy which is produced at this point. The reduced timeframe for activity undertaken as part of the current strategy, detailed above, will mean that some areas of activity and focus may be 'carried forward' to the next strategy rather than being completed as part of the current one.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

15. The Council could receive criticism from Ofsted, families and the SEND community, for not having an up to date SEND&I strategy in place given the current strategy is expected to run from 2020 to 2023. If the proposal is accepted, clear information about the extension period and plans for work from mid to late 2023 will need to be made available and shared through communication channels which are accessed by stake holders, for example the Local Offer website and through regular communications with schools and settings.

Financial Implications

16. The financial implications are linked to the risk that the Green Paper developments are not taken into account and the Council is left in a position where it is not in an aligned position and as such this could bring financial risk

Legal Implications

17. There are no legal implications identified.

Options Considered

18. The options considered are to continue as originally envisaged; to have an updated SEND&I strategy available for September 2023. This has been rejected as a strategy developed over the forthcoming 9 months would require some existing elements to be 'carried across'. It would also not reflect the proposals contained within the recent SEND and AP Green Paper effectively.

Conclusions

19. To enable a co-produced SEND&I strategy to be delivered which effectively details the areas for development and delivery in this area an extension period is needed for the existing SEND&I strategy.

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