

**Executive Response to the Final Report of the Special Schools Post-16  
SEN Scrutiny Task Group**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the Executive's response to the final report of the Special Schools Post-16 SEN Task Group (August 2012).

**Action Required of the Committee**

2. To note the Executive's responses and agree further action as appropriate.

**Background**

3. The Task Group was established by Children's Services Select Committee in September 2010 with the following terms of reference:
  - 1) To establish the strengths and weaknesses of current special school and post-16 SEN provision in Wiltshire, taking into account the views of service users, parents and other stakeholder groups;
  - 2) To consider examples of best practice in special school and post-16 provision in Wiltshire and other authority areas;
  - 3) To make recommendations with respect to how special schools and post-16 SEN provision can be developed to ensure improved outcomes for Wiltshire residents with SEN.

## Task Group Recommendations and Executive Responses

### Predicting and meeting future demand for SEN provision

#### *Task Group recommendation:*

1. The Task Group believes it is of the utmost importance that Wiltshire plans and develops now for the future needs of those with SEN. This is of particular importance because of the capacity issues being faced by Larkrise School and St Nicholas School. The Task Group understands that no overall increase in demand for places in special schools is expected. Given the population growth projected in Wiltshire and academic evidence suggesting that the numbers of children with ASDs and SLDs are increasing nationally, the Task Group is concerned that demand for special school places may in fact increase in the future.

The Group therefore recommends that the following work is undertaken and brought back to Committee:

- an analysis projecting future demand for SEN in Wiltshire based on the Core Strategy
- a strategic plan detailing how the projected need will be met (including post-16 education)

#### ***Executive response:***

A review of Special Educational Needs was conducted in 2010 which included a data analysis over a five year period showing that there was no significant increase in the numbers of children with SLD/PMLD in Wiltshire. The predicted numbers from this analysis show that the situation is relatively stable. If there is growth in the population in some areas of Wiltshire there maybe a corresponding slight increase in the numbers of children with special educational needs but it is difficult to predict future trends in population growth. The academic evidence referred to by the Task Group recognised that “consistency in definitions of need make longer term service planning and development difficult”. This academic evidence was designed to provide teachers and parents with “educational resources to enable practioners to formulate an effective teaching and learning package for children and young people with complex needs in the classroom”.

The figures for Wiltshire school population 2011 are:-

Table 1. Wiltshire school population for 2011 extracted from the Wiltshire Population 2011 booklet

Type of school	Number of schools	Pre-school settings	NOR<5 in the school	5-10	11-15	Post 16	Total
Primary	199	312	5,155	29,048	10		34,525
Secondary	29			5	25,087	4,696	29,788
Special	6		12	88	353	52	504
YPSS	1				74	1	75
All	235	312	5,167	29,141	25,524	4,749	64,892

The latest population data for Wiltshire:

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2021	2026
Total population	461,480	464,310	466,950	469,820	472,780	475,870	492,630	510,300

The latest young people (0-18) population increase:

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2021	2026
No. of young people	101,510	101,340	101,020	101,030	100,710	100,440	100,810	101,240

There are around 20,000 more houses that have to be built throughout Wiltshire and this will bring approximately 6,200 primary aged children and 4,400 more secondary aged children by 2026.

Therefore there could be 111,840 young people in Wiltshire aged 0 – 18 in 2026. Not all of the young people are in Wiltshire schools i.e. those in colleges or employment post 16 and the 0-4 year olds in pre-schools.

Approximately 64% of 0 – 18 year olds are in Wiltshire schools. Therefore the school aged population could be 71,577 by 2026.

If the proportion of students is the same for each cohort and therefore the total population then there could be 558 young people to be expected in our special schools. This is an increase in the present population of 54 young people by 2026. The Special Educational Needs Team and School Strategic Planning team will have to plan for this increase if the assessment and allocation of out of county placements are to stay the same

Discussions with the Army suggest that the population is at about 12,000 troops at the present in Wiltshire. This figure will increase over the next few years but with the army downsizing the final figure will remain at about the figure it is today – about 12,000.

To help predict numbers of learners with SEN moving out of special schools and help Wiltshire meet future demands a Transitions Development Group has been established that will co-ordinate and meet three times this year. The group is well attended by the Special Schools, College (both mainstream and specialist) and associated partners (Integrated Youth Service colleagues, and representatives from examination boards). By bringing these groups together we are ensuring that future SEN demands are met and that a co-ordinated approach to curriculum mapping for transitions between schools and college for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LLDD) is achieved.

To meet further the future demand of our post 16 LLDD young people we have co-ordinated and supported financially further development of link provision between all our special schools and Wiltshire College. This ensures that the College is ready to meet each individual's learning and support needs before they make their transition from Special School to College.

Recent financial developments announced by the Department for Education for 2013 to 2014 include new formula funding methods for all maintained schools including special schools. These arrangements are currently subject to consultation with Schools Forum and all schools in Wiltshire and it is too early to report on the final decisions. On 3 September the Government issued draft legislation on the reform of provision for children and young people with SEN. This legislation and the new funding arrangements include duties related to a new

commissioning arrangement with special schools; it will no longer be possible to secure a fixed number of places for Wiltshire pupils in any maintained or academy special school located in Wiltshire. Any potential investment and joint strategic planning will have to be considered in the context of this new legislation.

In addition, Wiltshire Local Authority has pathfinder status trialling the Department for Education's new approach to assessment and financial arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs. This will have implications for the admission and placement of children in our Special Schools. The trial is currently underway.

Once the above implications and consultations have concluded a review will be undertaken and shared with service providers and the Task Group.

### **Healthcare in Wiltshire's special schools**

#### *Task Group recommendation:*

2. That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and, if appropriate, Wiltshire PCT bring a report to the Committee responding to the concerns raised by Wiltshire's special schools in relation to joint agency provision for pupils who have a specific health care need. This report should set out how the concerns raised by the school will be addressed.

#### **Executive response:**

Over the last year, the local authority's SEN Team and Wiltshire Community Health Services have worked together, in consultation with special schools, to update the document on 'Including children and young people with complex health needs in early years settings and schools'. This document was signed off by the Disability/SEN Strategy Group (a sub group of Wiltshire's Children's Trust) in May. There will be an update to the Group on how the protocol is working in practice later this year.

Following on from this work, it has now been agreed that the PCT's Children's Commissioning Lead, Julia Cramp, and children's health providers, will be invited three times a year to the regular meetings that the local authority's SEN Team hold with the Headteachers of special schools. This will provide a forum for concerns to be discussed and resolved at a strategic level.

Wiltshire is one of 20 Pathfinders for the 2011 SEN/Disability Green Paper proposing the use of a single assessment process and plan for health, education and social care and a new integrated team will start working together this month to test new paperwork and processes for improving support for children and families. It is proposed that a report is brought to the Committee once the team has completed its first three months of operation.

#### *Task Group recommendation:*

3. That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Wiltshire PCT enter a dialogue with respect to the provision of nursing care in special schools and a report is brought to the Committee setting out the funding agreements currently in place for its provision and how they compare with equivalent funding agreements in Wiltshire's statistical neighbours.

#### **Executive response:**

The Service Director for Children's Commissioning and Performance is also the PCT's children's commissioning lead. It is recognised that special schools are now dealing with an

increasing number of children and young people with complex health needs and that special schools need effective health support in managing these children and young people. There is no data available to specifically compare funding for health care in special schools as health support for special schools is provided by a combination of Children's Community Nurses and Public Health School Nurses who only undertake a proportion of their work in special schools.

It is proposed that the Service Director for Children's Commissioning and Performance uses the children's commissioners' network across the South West to look at nursing support for special schools and brings a report to a future meeting of the Committee.

### **Larkrise School, Trowbridge**

#### *Task Group recommendation:*

4. That in planning the buildings and grounds for the new care home on the former Paddocks site, a feasibility study is undertaken with respect to the following proposals, which would benefit the education and welfare of pupils at Larkrise Special School:

- 1) additional land is allocated to Larkrise school to increase its current outside space;
- 2) following consultation with the school, provision of a new access route to Larkrise school running from the Hilperton Road (A361) is incorporated, which would:
  - ease the severe traffic congestion experienced in the residential area during pick-up and drop-off times at Larkrise School and Paxcroft Primary School;
  - decrease the potential danger of accidents resulting from congestion currently experienced within the school's car park;
  - free-up space at the front of the school (the existing access route) for possible development and expansion of the school.

#### ***Executive response:***

The School Strategic Planning Team has had some initial discussions with Larkrise School Headteacher and the Service Director for Adult Social Care and Housing Strategy. The discussions centred on the possibility of additional land being acquired from the adjacent proposed adult care home in order that the footprint of Larkrise School could be increased. Any additional land could increase the outdoor area for the school or allow further building development of the school, dependent on suitable planning permission. The school has a number of temporary buildings that could be considered not fit for purpose. The School Strategic Planning Team has identified a sum of money from 2012/13 New Deal for Schools (NDS) to conduct a feasibility study into the proposed suggestions. This work could start immediately.

### **St Nicholas School, Chippenham**

#### *Task Group recommendation:*

5. That the Cabinet of Wiltshire Council gives consideration to allocating capital funding to the purchase of a suitable property to accommodate St Nicholas School's post-16 provision, which would both allow its continuance and development and free-up space within the main school buildings.

#### ***Executive response:***

The majority of learners in Wiltshire's special schools are likely to progress to Wiltshire College at either 16 or 18 years of age. Wiltshire learners that are educated at an Independent Specialist College (ISC) are also likely to attend Wiltshire College to complete their education. Where Wiltshire College is an appropriate transition we can facilitate partnership working between schools, Independent Specialist Colleges and Mainstream College to ensure high levels of expertise and support for young people that can include areas of Independent Living that could not be offered by Mainstream College alone. 5-day LLDD provision at local college, aimed at young people leaving Wiltshire's special schools, has worked very well as an alternative to Independent Specialist College (ISC). This is offered at the Salisbury and Trowbridge campus sites of Wiltshire College. From Sept 2012 this programme will also run at the Chippenham Campus, making it more accessible to young people.

St Nicholas School are currently through to the finals of a national competition to win a house worth £250,000. The vote finishes on 20 September. Members are asked to support this initiative by voting via this website [www.40.persimmonhomes.com/vote?charities=S-Z](http://www.40.persimmonhomes.com/vote?charities=S-Z)

In addition there could be capital funds allocated in 2012/13 to increasing the size of St Nicholas School to support their ambition of allocating additional space for post-16 provision. These plans could free-up space within the main school buildings. There needs to be a full needs assessment and feasibility study to secure what is needed and for what purpose. Officers are currently meeting with the Head Teacher to understand the building needs so that feasibility studies can be conducted.

#### **Rowdeford School, Rowde**

##### *Task Group recommendation:*

6. That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services notes the Task Group's concerns with respect to disabled access at Rowdeford School and provides the Committee with a response.

##### ***Executive response:***

The concerns have been noted. Under the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) all schools are asked to make reasonable adjustments to their accommodation and provision for children and young people with disabilities. The school will be asked to consider creative solutions to the use of their buildings to accommodate any children and young people that have a physical disability. Placement of all children and young people placed at the school is undertaken with the school and with regard to the particular needs of the young person.

##### *Task Group recommendation:*

7. That the Cabinet of Wiltshire Council gives consideration to allocating capital funding to the development of Rowdeford School's proposed Eco-Learning Centre for the provision of post-16 education for those with SEN.

##### ***Executive response:***

Wiltshire College has offered programmes for learners with LLDD for many years, working

with local schools as well as ISCs. Programmes are offered at Trowbridge, Salisbury and Chippenham campus and include 5-day per week provision. Rowdeford School has worked with Wiltshire College for many years on pre-16 link provision to support the transition of learners at 16.

There are no plans to support this development from the School Strategic Planning team as this is considered a school development not a capacity, basic need or condition issue.

### **Downland School and Springfield Academy**

*Task Group recommendation:*

8. That the Council should ensure Wiltshire's current BSD special school provision is correctly configured and that, if it is not, creative solutions be found.

***Executive response:***

The Task Group may be aware that Springfields School has achieved Academy status, an outstanding school and is effectively not under the direct management of the local authority. Downland School is a local authority maintained school and has recently been the subject of an OfSTED inspection and was judged as good with some outstanding features. The local authority through its Special Educational Needs (SEN) officers continues to work with both schools to ensure that provision for children and young people with BESD is good. Through the work of the SEN officers discussions will be extended to both Governing bodies to explore opportunities for more collaborative approaches to enhance the existing good provision for children and young people with BESD

### **Residential provision for children and young people with SLD**

*Task Group recommendation:*

9. That the Committee receives figures showing the Council's total expenditure on out-of-county residential placements for children and young people with SLD in recent years, plus estimates of the comparative costs of developing and running an equivalent in-county facility

***Executive response:***

The Council has already begun work analysing the costs of out-of-county provision. Further analysis will be produced including the relative contributions received from the health authority and social care within the local authority. This information will be available to the Task Group and further discussions held to enable a comparison to be made of the costs of in-county provision and out-of-county provision.

*Task Group recommendation:*

10. That a report is brought to the Committee detailing the usage of and waiting times for Canon's House and Hillcote respite facilities. The Task Group notes that a Council review of short breaks is currently underway and requests that details of this be included in the response.

***Executive response:***

A joint review of overnight short breaks started earlier this year, led by the Service Director for Children's Commissioning and Performance (a post jointly funded by the PCT). The review is due to report to the Children's Trust Commissioning Executive and to the PCT's Clinical Commissioning Committee in October. This review has looked at short breaks provision at the two residential units in the County - Canon's House (run by the local authority) and Hillcote (run by Wiltshire Community Health services), and also at the Council's Family Link Scheme (short break fostering). The review has considered the numbers of children using overnight short break provision, the number of nights' support provided and costs of provision. Officers have also worked with Wiltshire Parent Carers Council to seek parents' views on how well existing provision meets their needs. There is no waiting list for Canon's House and Hillcote and access is based on need assessed by the local authority's Children's Disabilities Team.

A report can be provided to the Committee at its November meeting

**Resource Bases (SLCs)**

*Task Group recommendation*

11. That a report detailing what programmes are in place for the identification of Speech and Language problems in school aged children, how the Council measures its performance in this area and how it compares with other local authorities

***Executive response:***

The Speech and Language Service is jointly commissioned by the LA and NHS, performance is regularly monitored and outcomes are part of the specification agreed at the time of the original tender two years ago. The Trust Board receives regular updates on performance.

**Conclusion**

6. **Members are asked to:**

1. **Note the above Executive's response to the final report of the Special Schools Post-16 SEN Scrutiny Task Group; and**
2. **Agree any further action as appropriate.**



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**Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE, Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

**Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director**

**Appendices**

None

**Background documents**

Final Report of the Special Schools Post-16 SEN Scrutiny Task Group.