

**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee**

**27 January 2015**

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## **Final Report of the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Task Group**

### **Purpose**

1. To present the conclusions and recommendations of the SEND Task Group for endorsement.

### **Background**

2. In October 2013 the Children's Select Committee discussed its work priorities for 2013-17 and agreed that children and young people with SEND should remain a key part of the Overview and Scrutiny forward work programme. This was later approved by the O&S Management Committee.
3. The Committee's continued focus on SEND also reflected aspirations in the Council's Business Plan 2013-17:
  - "Young people with disabilities, learning difficulties or special educational needs find it easy to manage the transition into adulthood and access a wide range of supported, independent living and work opportunities."
  - "There is a much narrower achievement or aspiration 'gap' for children and young people from vulnerable groups (such as looked after children, children who receive free school meals or have disabilities, special education needs or mental health issues)."
  - "To protect those who are most vulnerable"
  - "To provide opportunities for every child and young person to improve their attainment and skills so they can achieve their full potential"

### **Terms of Reference**

4. Following a scoping exercise that included officers and executive members, the SEND Task Group was established with the following terms of reference:

To explore how we can best prepare young people with SEND for Adulthood, including:

- Local education and training options, including managing transitions
- Planning for employment and supporting local employers to employ young people with SEND
- Providing housing options to support young people with SEND to live in their communities
- Developing communities that are inclusive, welcoming and supportive of young people with SEND.

The task group's four themes are derived from the Department for Education's [Preparing for Adulthood](#) programme, which is part of the delivery support for the Government's SEN and disability reforms.

## Methodology

5. The Task Group had the following members:

Rev Alice Kemp (Task Group Chairman and SEN Parent Governor Representative on the Committee)  
 Mr Ken Brough (Primary Parent Governor Representative on the Committee)  
 Cllr Trevor Carbin  
 Cllr Mary Champion  
 Cllr Sue Evans  
 Cllr Simon Jacobs  
 Cllr John Walsh

6. The Task Group met on ten occasions and received evidence from the following witnesses:

### Wiltshire Council witnesses

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Cllr Richard Gamble   | Portfolio Holder for Schools, Skills and Youth  |
| Cllr Alan Macrae      | Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding   |
| Cllr Allison Bucknell | Portfolio Holder for Staffing Equalities, Customer Care and Systems Thinking            |
| Julia Cramp           | Associate Director (joint with CCG) Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness |
| Susan Tanner          | Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning  |
| Vicky Dunncliffe      | Partnership/Education Officer post-16   |
| Mary Curran           | Lead Commissioner, Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness                  |
| Nicholas Breakwell    | Head of SEND Service  |
| Lucy Murray-Brown     | Head of Campuses and Operational Models   |
| James Cawley          | Associate Director, Adult Care Commissioning and Housing                                |
| Nicole Smith          | Head of Strategic Housing   |
| Janet O'Brien         | Head of New Housing   |
| John Walker           | Allocations and Options Manager, Housing  |
| Zara Letts            | Strategic HR Manager, HR Strategy and Policy  |
| Christina Gregory     | Research Policy Coordinator, Voice & Influence Team                                     |
| Lucy Kitchener        | Lead Commissioner – Joint Commissioning   |

Debbie Mauchline      Team Manager, Disabilities Provider Services,  
Employment and Community Skills

### External Witnesses

Wiltshire College  
Fairfield Farm College  
Wiltshire People 1<sup>st</sup>  
Parent members of South Wiltshire Mencap

7. The task group is extremely grateful to everyone who gave their time to contribute to this scrutiny review.
8. The task group regrets that it was unable to undertake wider consultation with young people with SEND and their parents. Attempts were made to arrange an information gathering session with parent members of the Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) but unfortunately timescales did not permit this.

### **Foreword**

9. The task group's ambitious terms of reference touch on many different services, organisations, legislative changes and local initiatives. The term SEND also encompasses a broad spectrum of different customer needs and challenges, the impact of which depends on age, family circumstances, learning difficulty and/or physical disability, healthcare needs, and other factors. Time has been needed in order to understand the challenges faced by young people with SEND and their families, and review the structures in place to support them. In some cases further work is needed by the committee, the executive and officers to investigate these further and make informed decisions about how they should be addressed.
10. Much of the task group's work has focused on the needs of those with more complex SEN, which represents approximately 1.7% of the population. It focussed less on the much broader issue of general SEN, which includes approximately 20% of the population. Reviewing provision for small customer groups with very specific needs raises difficult questions about the level of resource that should be allocated, especially in the current financial climate. The task group has tried to remain realistic and pragmatic in its thinking, but also believe it is important that young people with SEND and their families can rely on a certain level of offer from the council and its partners.
11. The task group has been impressed by the dedication of officers in the council's Joint Commissioning Team, including the Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning's contribution to the task group's work. In some areas, for example in its DCA Pathfinder work, Wiltshire is ahead of many other local authorities. The national SEND agenda means that many of the council's current SEND structures and processes are still embedding and good progress has been made. It is also acknowledged that some parents' experiences of public services when their child was young – services which have since changed and hopefully improved – may colour their perceptions of the council's offer, with

their young person now approaching adulthood. However, the review has highlighted two customer frustrations, encapsulated by two quotes from parents who met the task group:

1. “No-one tells you anything”
  2. “You have to fight for everything”
12. The task group does not imagine that these frustrations represent all parents’ experiences or are particular to Wiltshire, but hopes that the council is able to build on its Pathfinder success to lead the way in creatively providing a customer-led service for this group. There is a body of evidence demonstrating that the challenges associated with caring for a young person with SEND can place significant strains on a family, financially and in terms of their physical and mental wellbeing (not forgetting the joy that the young person will also bring). It is incumbent on the council to support those families so that they are not left behind when it comes to delivering the key outcomes in the council’s Business Plan 2013-17 for all. The phrase, “Where everybody matters”, is key for this customer group.

### **Summary of legislative and local context**

13. In 2011 the Council started work on the Disabled Children and Adults (DCA) Review. The Review has three main aims:
- Make things better for the people who use the services and give them more choice in deciding what type of support they want
  - Enable people to live the life they want
  - Ensure the council works efficiently.

The Review also aimed to improve the transition process from child to adult services that was often described by families as ‘falling off a cliff edge’.

14. During the same period, the government published the [‘SEND green paper – Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability’](#). In it the Government made commitments that by 2014 they would implement a single assessment and introduce an offer of a personal budget for families with an Education, Health and Care plan. In addition to this the green paper called for:
- Earlier intervention and prevention
  - Giving control to parents
  - Preparing young people for adulthood
  - Services to work together for families
  - Provide better support to vulnerable children
  - Development of a ‘local offer’ that describes what support is available and by whom
15. In September 2011 the Council was chosen as one of 20 pathfinder authorities to trial aspects of the Green Paper. The DCA review and the requirements of

the Green Paper were brought together and managed as the DCA Pathfinder. It was subsequently recommended that an integrated service to support young people aged from 0-25 with SEND should be developed. The 0-25yrs SEND service has now introduced the following:

### **My Plans (Education, Health and Care Plans)**

These replace SEN Statement, and other assessments and focus on a person-centred approach to outcomes based planning.

### **SEND lead workers**

These are the main contact for the family and makes sure the right professionals are involved to support them.

### **Service operating principles**

- Enabling and inclusive
- Person Centred
- Single assessment process and plan
- Timely services
- Excellent communication and information

### **Single management and aligned budgets**

16. In July 2014 the [Children's and Families Act 2014](#) received royal assent and the [SEN Code of Practice: 0-25 Years](#) was published. These made many of the things introduced under the council's DCA Pathfinder work a legal requirement from September 2014.

## **Theme 1: Education**

### **Evidence**

#### **Post-16 learner placements**

17. Because the task group's work is focused on how we prepare young people for adulthood, its work in this area has been focused on education for students with SEND aged 16 to 25.
18. When a young person with SEND is 16 they may leave full time education<sup>1</sup>, continue in their school if it offers post-16 provision (i.e. school sixth form), seek a placement at a mainstream college or seek a placement at an Independent Specialist Provider (ISP). The SEND Lead Worker is key to helping identify an appropriate placement for the young person.
19. The majority of Wiltshire students with SEN leaving school after year 11 will access provision at either their school sixth form or at Wiltshire College. Further education and sixth form colleges have a statutory responsibility to meet the needs of young people with SEN and must secure the special

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<sup>1</sup> Though under Raising the Participation Age (RPA) they must remain in either education or training until they are 18.

educational provision a learner needs and to make reasonable adjustments to prevent them being placed at a substantial disadvantage.

20. Placements at independent providers are generally by exception, for example, if a mainstream sixth form or further education college is unable to meet a learner's complex education support needs. The decision on whether to fund a place offered at an ISP is considered against the learner's needs and the capacity to meet needs locally.
21. In recent years Wiltshire Council has placed fewer post-16 students with SEND at ISPs and an increasing number of students at Wiltshire College. In the 2013/14 academic year, there were 142 students with SEND at local mainstream colleges and 67 at ISPs. Officers have reported that this is likely to reduce significantly in the next academic year, when a high number of learners will have finished their courses, and fewer 'out of county' places will have been agreed during the previous year. This trend is likely to continue and the range of different ISPs at which Wiltshire post-16 students are placed will also be reduced. This is intended to make the council's task of quality-assuring its post-16 providers for students with SEND simpler and more robust, enable investment in developing local provision, and enable Wiltshire's young people to be educated and have their needs met in their communities.
22. Officers report that the shift away from ISPs towards Wiltshire College was informed by the views of young people and their parent carers as expressed in the feedback used to inform the DCA Pathfinder work. It also reflects the aspiration in the council's Business Plan 2013-17, "We will improve educational provision for disabled children in Wiltshire to enable them to stay in their local community". The approach is underpinned by the following principles:
  - Young people should have access to an education based on person centred identified outcomes
  - Provision should enable educational progression and preparation for adulthood
  - All young people should have the same opportunity of access to appropriate education
  - Successful transitions to adulthood should be planned and person-centred
  - Wiltshire Council will support young people to remain in their local community
23. There is general agreement that some student's needs cannot be met locally, so there will always be some requirement for ISPs. There is also agreement that many students with some degree of SEND fare well in mainstream settings with an appropriate support package in place. The council's shift towards placing more students with SEND in mainstream settings is viewed as positive by some and negative by others and there are many facets to the debate:

24. **Development of independent living skills:** Some parents feel that ISPs' residential provision enables a better acquisition of independent living skills because the residential element provides an environment in which these can be taught and practiced in a structured way. Students may live together in a house or apartment on or near the ISP site and the learning of independent living skills within this environment forms part of the curriculum.

The counterargument is that when a young person finishes at an ISP that is not near their local community, they must transfer the skills they have learnt (such as catching the bus or visiting the shops) when they move back into their community. Students who are learning these skills at local colleges must transfer them to the home environment, which requires the support of parent carers in the process.

25. **Educational provision:** ISPs often have impressive facilities that are clearly designed around the needs of students with SEND. Mainstream colleges, which, whilst having some facilities designed specifically for students with SEND, most of their campuses will be designed with mainstream students in mind. Some people also believe that ISPs have historically possessed a greater degree of specialised teaching skills and a greater focus on the particular needs of their students. However, officers report the following:

- Investments have been made in local colleges so that students with SEND can learn in the safety of specialised provision, as well as being offered the opportunity to access mainstream provision.
- Having students with SEND working alongside those in mainstream provision creates an inclusive environment for the benefit of everyone (not just those with SEND).
- Although ISPs' facilities and marketing ability makes them an attractive proposition to many parents and students, it was reported that learner outcomes for students with SEND have been shown to be better on average at Wiltshire College than at the ISPs, despite the lower average cost of the placement. However, the task group have not seen the data demonstrating this.
- A higher percentage of students with SEND find employment after leaving Wiltshire College than those leaving ISPs. Again, the task group have not seen the data demonstrating this.
- It has been difficult to obtain learner outcome and attainment data from some ISPs, making them difficult to quality-assure.

26. **Cost:** Officers report that an average placement for a student with SEND at Wiltshire College costs £10,000-20,000pa while the average cost of a student at an ISP is around £60,000-70,000pa, with some packages costing over £100,000pa. However, the task group understands that the figure for ISP costs only represents the cost of the education element and excludes the cost of housing etc, so the total figure is likely to be higher.

Officers reported that in some cases at the end of a two-year post-16 course an ISP will write to the council stating that the required learner outcomes

have not been achieved and therefore an extra year's provision is needed, potentially adding to the cost further.

27. **Community networks:** There is only one ISP within the county boundary (Fairfield Farm College); all other Wiltshire post-16 students attending an ISP are therefore travelling or residing outside of the county for their education. The council has emphasised the importance of maintaining young people's links within their communities, particular as people with SEND are at greater risk of becoming isolated in the community if they do not establish local networks. This is reflected in the council's Meeting Needs Locally agenda. Officers report that attending a college a significant distance from a student's home or community, particular if the placement is residential, can diminish their friendship groups, knowledge of the local area and links with local support services. People with complex are generally considered safer if they are able to stay within their local community due to the greater contact with family and friends. The case of Winterbourne View is referred to as an example of the potential risks of people with SEND living outside of their community.
28. **Integration:** The past decade has seen an increasing focus on keeping children with SEND of all ages learning alongside other students within a mainstream setting where possible. Some believe that this tends to inhibit the provision of an environment that is designed specifically around students' needs. Others believe that integrating students within a mainstream setting, whenever possible, is a better preparation for adult life in which people with and without SEND live and work alongside each other.

#### *Wiltshire College*

29. As the biggest provider of post-16 provision in Wiltshire, the task group visited Wiltshire College's Trowbridge and Salisbury campuses and would like to thank Kim Hunte and her team for receiving them. Members were given a tour of the facilities and spoke with students and the senior leadership team about recent developments to the College's provision for learners with SEND.
30. In recent years the College has invested significantly in its facilities for this learner group to enable young people with SEND to have the benefits of specialist provision within the context of local mainstream provision. Prior to this the College offered provision for students with moderate learning difficulties at three of its sites, and provision for students with profound and multiple disabilities and learning difficulties (PMLD) at Trowbridge only. However, infrastructure limited the College's ability to meet the needs of learners with complex health and personal care needs and with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD).
31. In 2013 the council approached Wiltshire College to work in partnership and submit bids for Demographic Capital Grants Funding to improve infrastructure and increase capacity at each of its campuses. The largest bid submitted was for the Salisbury campus due to the limited facilities in place

and the need to increase capacity in this area. This is likely to grow further with the increase in military families being deployed to the region from 2016/17 onwards. The award for the Salisbury campus was £756,000 and, when complete, will broaden the range of learners whose needs can be met to include learners with PMLD. Developments include improved access, facilities for learners' health and personal care needs and for developing independent living skills, including a kitchen and retail outlet.

32. The award for the Trowbridge campus was £529,200. This campus already had facilities for learners with complex needs and PMLD, but these required significant refurbishment and remodelling. The developments afforded by the grant funding are expected to increase capacity for learners with PMLD from 10 to 30 students and include a similar range of resources to that now available on the Salisbury site.
33. The award for the Lackham campus was £502,000. This has increased the size of foundation learners' accommodation by 100%, created a new sensory room and wet room, and is expected to double the capacity for LLDD learners.

#### *Fairfield Farm College*

34. As the only ISP in Wiltshire, the task group visited Fairfield Farm College (FFC) and would like to thank the Principal, Janet Kenward and her team for receiving them. Members were given a tour of the facilities and spoke with students and the senior leadership team about the college's provision. The FFC site is a 26 acre farm in the village of Dilton Marsh that includes a café and farm shop where students learn work skills to prepare them for work experience and post-college employment. Residential students live in college houses in the village.
35. FFC are understandably concerned by the decreasing allocation of learner placements at ISPs by Wiltshire Council. They are proud of the provision they offer and believe its residential element offers many young people with SEND the greatest opportunity for achieving positive learning and life outcomes. FFC acknowledges that residential provision often carries a greater upfront cost than day provision within a mainstream setting. However, they believe that the actual whole cost to the public purse of supporting a young person with SEND should be considered. FFC referred the task group to a 2011 report by the Nation Audit Office, which states:

*“Placement decisions [made by local authorities] for students with higher-level needs are not consistently informed by a full analysis of comparable costs, creating risks to value for money. When deciding between independent specialist provision and general further education, comparable costs may include elements not funded by education budgets, but nonetheless paid for by the public purse. For example, while many local authorities consider a range of costs, less than a third responding to our survey have data on health and social care costs for students in mainstream settings. Our analysis suggests that taking all*

*comparable costs into account could influence whether local authorities choose mainstream or independent specialist provision.”*

(para 17) [‘Oversight of special education for young people aged 16–25’](#)

36. FFC also expressed concerns about the placement allocation process as it is described on the council website, feeling that it contravenes Department for Education guidance by favouring mainstream colleges unduly. This matter was referred to officers for further investigation, who report that they are satisfied that the website is compliant but will keep the matter under review.

## **Conclusions**

### SEND Lead Workers

37. The role of the SEND Lead Worker is to:
- Act as a single point of contact for the child/ family
  - Keep practitioners focused on the child/ family
  - Empower the child/young person/ family to make decisions and be heard
  - Coordinate actions agreed by practitioners and the family and avoid potential duplication
38. Some parents spoken to by the task group reported that they and the young person’s school do not know who their SEND Lead Worker is. This leads to Lead Workers not being invited to reviews and, when they do attend, being unknown to the young person and their family. Lead Workers are central in supporting young people with SEND into their post-16 learning placement and a lack of meaningful involvement can result in this key aspect of the transition process failing to work effectively. The Lead Worker role is also crucial to other aspects of preparation for adulthood.
39. The task group recognises that the Lead Worker posts are relatively new and are still being developed. It also notes the responses already provided by officers regarding this issue: Schools have been given the necessary information and are responsible for inviting the relevant people to reviews. However, some parents clearly have concerns about the process this issue needs further investigation. (**Recommendation 1**).

### Mainstream colleges and Independent Specialist Providers (ISPs)

40. The task group has heard persuasive arguments regarding the strengths and weaknesses of mainstream colleges and ISPs in terms of achieving positive life outcomes for young people with SEND. However, the task group’s role is to offer a ‘lay perspective’ and it cannot conclude whether one model is inherently superior to the other and in what circumstances. Its role is to ensure that the council has used a sound process and evidence base in deciding its direction, which in effect has been to significantly increase the

proportion of post-16 students with SEND being placed at Wiltshire College. **(Recommendation 2).**

41. The task group was impressed by its visits to both Wiltshire College and Fairfield Farm College:
42. The capital investment Wiltshire College has made into improving its facilities for learners with SEND was evident on both of the campuses visited. The College showed a clear sense of direction in recognising past issues and the reputational challenges now faced, and in supporting a SEND student cohort that has increased dramatically in recent years.
43. Fairfield Farm College's grounds and facilities are immediately impressive and the College appears to offer a supportive environment and broad learning experience, afforded by the College's on-site farm, café and automobile workshop. The parents of young people with SEND could not fail to be impressed and reassured by FFC's learning environment and the sense of wraparound support offered.
44. Again, these are lay observations and the task group cannot assess the actual quality of provision offered by either provider. It is the task group's role to ensure that the council has appropriate quality assurance measures in place to ensure that Wiltshire students with SEND are placed appropriately. **(Recommendation 3).**
45. Wiltshire College's most recent [Ofsted inspection](#) report (April 2014) was rated overall as 'Needs Improvement'. However, supporting vulnerable students and those with additional learning needs was listed as a strength, which the task group commends:  
  
*"Around one fifth of full-time students receive additional learning support and they achieve considerably better than their peers. Vulnerable students, such as those in care and students with complex learning needs, achieve very well."*
46. This is in contrast to the perceptions reported by some parents from the Salisbury area. Some are evidently concerned at the prospect of their young person attending Wiltshire College, rather than the ISP that they may have expected them to attend in previous years. These concerns may or may not reflect actual issues with quality of provision, but the task group is also aware that reputational legacy issues remain in regards to the College's provision for students with SEND, particularly in Salisbury. These negative perceptions can be challenging to overcome and the task group was pleased to hear the College and the council acknowledge that there is work to do in this area. **(Recommendation 4).**
47. The task group acknowledges the financial climate in which post-16 learner placement decisions are now being made. It is difficult to assess the relative differences in weighting given to financial constraints, and to the placement that best meets the needs of the young person. However, the task group

accepts that the shift towards a greater use of mainstream post-16 provision is unlikely to be reversed. The priority must be that the funding the council does have is allocated in a fair way that is based on matching the needs of the young person with the provider.

48. There is a perception amongst some that parents with the time, expertise and resources to 'fight their corner' have a much greater chance of success in securing their preferred placement than those who do not. Parent carers who are unhappy with a decision regarding their young person with SEND can seek mediation and/or take their complaint to an independent tribunal. But the task group did not find a full explanation of the mediation or tribunal process on the Local Offer website. SEND Lead Workers are central to supporting the young person and family through the placement process, so the concerns raised under paragraph 38 are relevant here too. **(Recommendation 5)**
49. The task group's evidence gathering has demonstrated that being the parent carer of young person with SEND involves many challenges and can be exhausting at times. Some parents' preference for a residential post-16 placement for their young person, rather than a non-residential college, may partly be due to them being exhausted by the demands of caring for the young person up to the age of 16. This highlights the importance that good support services, particularly respite care, are available to parent carers so that they do not reach 'breaking point' (see Theme 3: Housing).

## **Theme 2: Employment**

### **Evidence**

50. The SEND Code of Practice states that the vast majority of young people with SEND are capable of sustainable paid employment with the right preparation and support. The Code requires all professionals working with them to share that presumption. The National Audit Office report, 'Oversight of special education for young people aged 16-25', published in November 2011, estimates that supporting one person with a learning disability into employment could, in addition to improving their independence and self-esteem, increase that person's income by between 55 and 95 per cent.

### **Supported Internships**

51. The Code of Practice states that supported internships are one of the most effective ways of preparing young people with SEND for employment. Supported internships are a structured study programme based primarily at an employer. They enable young people aged 16-24 with SEND to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need through learning in the workplace. Supported internships are unpaid but support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme. Alongside their time at the employer, young people complete a personalised study programme.

52. A Supported Internships scheme is currently being piloted by the council's Children's Commissioning Team and the Wiltshire Employment Support Team (WEST) to help young people with SEND find paid employment. In September 2014 eight young people (aged 18-24) from Wiltshire were supported under the project specifically designed for young people with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The young people attend a three day study programme based at County Hall, Trowbridge, and in January 2015 two twelve-week work experience placements commenced.
53. Officers report that the project received approximately 15 applications in its first year. It is hoped that the scheme can be expanded in subsequent years once it has embedded and people had confidence in the outcomes it can deliver. Once these have been demonstrated the council hopes to encourage other public bodies to participate in the scheme.

#### Wiltshire Employment Support Team (WEST)

54. Within the council's 0-25 SEND service sits WEST, a small team who assist young people (14-25) with SEND to find and sustain paid employment with local employers. The task group received a briefing from the manager of WEST and considered WEST's Annual Report for 2013 to 2014.
55. WEST look at the different types of paid employment that will suit the young person, based upon their skills, interests and experience, and then aim to match individual skills to available jobs, including apprenticeships. WEST works with the young person to enable them to reach stability when in paid employment, and in applying for jobs and preparing for interviews.
56. WEST's Annual Report 2013-14 included a suite of targets set for WEST, copied below. The task group noted that in some cases WEST had significantly exceeded their agreed outcomes for the year (for example, number of employer meetings conducted and number of employer contacts made), while in others the agreed outcomes had been missed by fairly large margins (for example, case studies to be written, customers to start Apprenticeships and customers employed straight from education).

| <b>WEST outcomes agreed</b>                       | Totals achieved (2013-14) | Previous year (2012-13) |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| • 50 people into employment                       | 33                        | 12                      |
| • 15 customers to increase their working hours    | 6                         | 6                       |
| • 5-10 customers to change their job              | 6                         | 6                       |
| • 5 employers to employ more than one person      | 5                         | 2                       |
| • 15 customers to achieve 16+ hours employment    | 9                         | 2                       |
| • 40 customers to attend Preparing for Employment | 52                        | 48                      |

|   |      |     |
|---|------|-----|
| • 1000 employer contacts                | 1046 | 317 |
| • 250 employer meetings                 | 421  | 91  |
| • 10 customers to start Apprenticeships | 2    | 0   |

57. It was reported that there were a number of factors to consider in relation to these concerns:

- The agreed outcomes were based on having an expected number of job coaches in post, which was not reached during the year. It is hoped that the full number of job coaches will be in post in 2015;
- Having moved from adult care to the SEND team, a period of officer adjustment and learning in terms of working with young people;
- A culture where some people rely on 'out of work benefits', making them fearful of working over 16 hours per week in case this impacts on their benefit entitlement.
- Employers are receiving an increasing number of approaches about possible entry level positions and are therefore less keen to engage with WEST.

58. None of the parent carers spoken to by the task group (approximately 15) were familiar with WEST. Officers acknowledged that there is work to do in terms of raising the profile of the team and its work, which will be supported by its new position within the SEND team as opposed to within Adult Social Care.

#### Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

59. Under Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 all public bodies in England and Wales are required to consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. "Social value" in this context involves looking beyond the price of each individual contract and looking at what the collective benefit to a community is when a public body chooses to award a contract.

60. The task group is aware that within the council's Highways and Streetscene contract awarded in 2014 there was a requirement that the contractor offer 6 apprenticeships for young people. However, a March 2014 [report](#) to Children's Select Committee providing an update on Apprenticeships in Wiltshire stated that young people with SEND are less likely to achieve a level 2 qualification and, therefore, are less likely to access an Apprenticeship programme.

#### Area Board work

61. Devizes Area Board have recently commissioned a short film focusing on several case studies of young people with SEND who have found employment with Devizes employers. This is being taken forward by the council's Integrated Youth, WEST and Communities teams and a Create Studios, a social enterprise based in Swindon. The film is intended to:

- Alert young people with SEND to the opportunities available to them in the Devizes area;
  - Alert potential employers to success stories of employment of young people with SEND and the support that is available to facilitate this;
  - Demonstrate how some assumed barriers can be removed; and
  - Encourage greater dialogue, improved mutual understanding and closer links between the business community and young people with SEND.
62. The film is intended to stand alone as an on-line or physical resource and could be used in presentations to schools and colleges when giving careers talks to demonstrate how young people with SEND can achieve employment and can overcome potential barriers.

## **Conclusions**

63. The task group commends the achievements of the Supported Internships project thus far. It supports the council's approach of acting as an exemplar to other organisations and the aspiration to build on the success of the Supported Internships project's first year. It would be a great shame if the project was not given sufficient profile or resources in order to maintain momentum and build on its first year's work. (**Recommendation 6**)
64. The task group strongly supports the value of the council's WEST team and the importance of offering support to young people with SEND who may otherwise have difficulty finding paid employment. (**Recommendation 7**)
65. The task group would like to understand to what extent the council has met, and will continue to meet, the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 in relation to securing employment opportunities for young people with SEND. It recognises that when making commissioning and procurement decisions the upfront cost of contracts will be a significant factor. However, when times are economically tough it is more important than ever to get maximum value and this may involve looking at the wider social value of commissioning decisions. The council may be improving the economic wellbeing of Wiltshire more effectively by contracting with companies who engage with groups who are vulnerable to exclusion, such as young people with SEND. (**Recommendations 8 and 9**)
66. The task group supports the work done by Devizes Area Board in building links between employers and young people with SEND and demonstrating how many assumed barriers to employment can be removed . It is hoped that other Area Boards can follow this lead and launch their own initiatives to support employment for this group. This will require the profile of this work being raised across the council. (**Recommendation 10**)

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## **Theme 3: Housing**

### **Introduction**

67. Having a stable, appropriate place to live is fundamental to building a positive, meaningful future and finding suitable, long-term accommodation can be more complicated for people with SEND due to having to manage their additional needs or requirements. The National Audit Office estimates that equipping a young person with the skills to live in semi-independent rather than fully supported housing could, in addition to quality of life improvements, reduce lifetime support costs to the public purse by around £1 million per person.

#### Housing options for young people with SEND

68. The options include staying at home with parents, supported living (where the person receives support to enable them to live in their own home) or residential care.
69. It was reported that an increasing number of young people with SEND – just as with young people without SEND – are now living at home with parents for longer. However, like most young people, young people with SEND often eventually want to live independently. When in single occupancy flats they are more likely than those without SEND to become isolated from the community without appropriate support networks in place.
70. An alternative model is to have a cluster of several flats located together around a communal space and potentially shared provision for a stay-over carer. This can be an efficient way of providing supported living to several people with SEND and mitigates the risk of tenants becoming isolated in the community. It also decreases the cost of care. A [report](#) produced by the Wiltshire Disability Partnership Board<sup>2</sup> showed that a key priority for people with SEND was “More housing available where people can live on their own with shared facilities too”.
71. Historically there have been obstacles to developing this kind of housing provision: Since 1996 the housing application system has assumed that it is a single householder or family unit applying for accommodation. There are complexities around incorporating the possibility of individual tenancies around a communal living space due to the subsidy for single housing. Any shared element in accommodation increases overhead costs because they have to be managed and therefore tend to create a service charge to be administered to each tenant. Housing developers have historically not liked shared tenancies because when one tenant leaves issues can arise such as identifying liability for any unpaid bills. Also, developers can be reluctant to build any kind of housing that deviates from a standard model as it is perceived to be more expensive to build and have a narrower market appeal.

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<sup>2</sup> Wiltshire Disability Partnership Board (WDPB) is co-chaired by Wiltshire Council's Interim Head of Commissioning (Disabilities) and a learning disability representative. Other members of the board are either selected from key organisations or because it is part of their job role. WDPB consulted with a wide selection of Wiltshire people with SEND on their views on the issue of housing, and produced a 'Have Your Say' report presenting the results.

72. The New Housing team are now working with developers to build a limited number of developments based on this cluster model. These will comprise approximately five flats with secure entry systems clustered around a communal space, but with individual tenancies. Clients will be able to bid for them through the Homes4Wiltshire housing applications system. Because of the demographics only 4 or 5 clusters are expected to be needed and these are likely to be in the larger towns. There is likely to be a 3 year lead-in with these properties so they will not be available until approximately 2017/18.
73. It was originally reported that a mapping exercise would be undertaken to establish where people with SEND are in the county and forecast the future housing need on that basis. However there seems to be a lack of clarity around what data is available that could inform the development plans.

#### Homes 4 Wiltshire

74. The task group received a briefing from officers from the council's Homes4Wiltshire team: Like anyone else, people with SEND can register with Homes4Wiltshire when they are 16 years old and can bid for social housing when they are 18 years old. Officers are able to bid for a Homes4Wiltshire property on behalf of those with more profound or complex needs who cannot bid for themselves. An 'easy read' application form is available on request by contacting the Homes4Wiltshire Devizes office, but does not appear to be available via the Homes4Wiltshire website. The Homes4Wiltshire application **guidance** is not currently produced in an 'easy read' format but officers have reported it will be produced shortly.
75. The Wiltshire Disability Partnership Board's 'Have Your Say' report found that the majority of users seem to understand the Homes4Wiltshire application and bidding process, but some problems did arise after this. Some found the internet and telephone bidding systems confusing and some thought that bidding for a house amounted to having secured it, leading to confusion and disappointment. A key outcome from the report was for "More support for people with learning difficulties to bid for houses and understand what is happening."

#### Respite care for young people with SEND

76. The task group has not investigated the provision of short breaks or respite care for young people with SEND in detail. However, it has become aware of the following issues:
77. Young people aged 5-17 who have a severe learning disability and are assessed as meeting the criteria may currently access breaks at Canon's House in Devizes. Canon's House is a registered children's home that supports severely learning-disabled young people whose needs are so specialist that all other short breaks services are considered insufficient.
78. When a young person turns 18 they are no longer eligible for care at Canon's House and are instead directed towards a suitable residential adult care

provider. Some parents have expressed concern that this leads to their 18 year old young person being supported alongside people who are much older, some of them elderly. Parents are also concerned that, unlike the pre-18 respite provision, adult provision does not provide structured activities that develop the young person's independent living skills.

79. The task group is also aware of a specific case of an young man with complex SEND who has not accessed a respite service since he turned eighteen due to his challenging behaviour.

### Short breaks

80. The Wiltshire Short Breaks Scheme is for any child or young person aged 5+ who receives 25 hours or more support in school. It can be taken in three ways – hours at a specialist Barnardo's play scheme, cash, or half-and-half. During June 2014, Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Parent Carer Council jointly held a series of consultation events to inform future development of short breaks for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability. An online survey was then held and parent carers voted in favour of a change to the eligibility age for the scheme, changing it from 4-17 to 5-18 (the day before the 19<sup>th</sup> birthday). Accordingly this change has been implemented for the 2015/16 Short Breaks Scheme.

### **Conclusions**

81. The task group welcomes the work underway to develop housing suitable for young people with SEND along the apartment cluster model described. This model seems to offer the perfect balance for many young people with SEND, allowing them to live independently in the community, but amongst their peer group and with shared support available.
82. The task group is also aware that this model has been 'sold' to parents and young people for several years and yet a scarcity of this form of housing exists. Some parents and young people have become disillusioned with the situation and there is a need for the council to engage with them and discuss the council's direction in order to build trust and relieve anxiety about future housing prospects. (**Recommendations 11 and 12**)
83. Social workers and SEND lead workers must be able to support and guide young people and their families through the housing process. Under the Code of Practice 2014, local authorities must ensure that a young person's EHC plan review, which is undertaken in Year 9 (and every year thereafter), includes a discussion of where they want to live in the future, who they want to live with and what support they will need. Local housing options, support in finding accommodation, housing benefits and social care support must be explained.
84. The task group's conversations with parents suggest that social workers and SEND lead workers do not always offer a thorough explanation of housing options and the processes for accessing them. Housing officers have

acknowledged that engagement with children's services, as opposed to adult social care, could be improved to enable young people and their families to plan ahead better and begin preparing for adulthood earlier. As the cluster model flats described come on stream it will be particularly important that social workers and SEND lead workers are aware of them and can support young people in bidding for them if they wish. (**Recommendations 13 and 14**)

85. One parent commented, "The constant emphasis on 'keeping young people at home' ignores the impact of this on parents...My son staying at home has a real impact on my life and this and any appropriate type of respite service has been overlooked." The task group is concerned that all young people with SEND who meet the eligibility criteria should have access to suitable respite care. It is unsatisfactory if a young person receives this provision amongst their peer group up until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, but any provision thereafter is amongst people who may be much older. Young people who do not have SEND do not tend to mix with much older people – they spend time with people their own age – and young people with SEND should be given the same opportunity.
86. For those already receiving support from children's services, the [Care Act 2014](#) makes it clear that local authorities must continue to provide children's services until adult provision has started or a decision is made that the young person's needs do not meet the eligibility criteria for adult care and support following an assessment. Children's services must not be discontinued simply because a young person has reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday ('[Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years](#)' paragraph 3.52). However, it is also the case that it is technically illegal to provide care for under 18 year olds alongside people who are over 18. The task group were pleased to hear that the issue is being addressed as a priority and further information will be welcome.
87. The respite care or short break provision available to those who are 18 to 25 should be structured and continue to develop the young person's independent living skills. The task group notes that the council's DCA Pathfinder project is aimed at improving the transition process from children to adult services, which is often described by families as 'falling off a cliff edge'. The change in provision from age 17 to 18 potentially represents an example of such a 'cliff edge' and, if so, requires attention.
88. There are a number of potential options for addressing the identified gaps, which require investigation beyond the scope of the task group: These might include the development of a specialist 18-25 respite facility in Wiltshire. This could extend its services to providing 'outreach' care in young people's homes. Alternatively the council could work with existing respite providers of all age groups to develop a more age-appropriate respite service that ensures young people who are over-18, but still young adults, can access respite care amongst their own age group and continue to develop their independent living skills. The task group understands that similar options are

now being investigated and look forward to the committee receiving further information.

89. It is a concern if young people with SEND who exhibit challenging behaviour and are 18+ cannot access respite provision in Wiltshire. Some parent carers describe the availability of respite as an essential lifeline in coping with the demands of caring for a young person with SEND. This should not become unavailable when the young person turns 18, no matter how the complex the young person's needs may be. (**Recommendation 15**)

#### Short breaks

90. The task group welcomed the news that the Wiltshire Short Breaks Scheme has recently been extended so that young people remain eligible until one day before their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Theme 4: Community Inclusion**

#### **Evidence**

##### Wiltshire's Local Offer

91. Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 all local authorities must publish a Local Offer, setting out in one place information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEND.
92. The Code of Practice states that the Local Offer should not simply be a directory of existing services; its success depends upon full engagement with children, young people and their parents and the process of developing the Local Offer will help local authorities to improve provision. Wiltshire's Local Offer website was developed following a series of workshops and engagement events with stakeholders and can be found at [www.wiltshirelocaloffer.org.uk](http://www.wiltshirelocaloffer.org.uk)
93. In 'testing' the Local Offer website, the following issues were identified:
- Some searches did not yield any information, potentially causing frustration.
  - The website emphasises what 'outcomes' young people can expect to reach at certain stages of their life or what rough expectations they can have of organisations, but this information could be more practical and specific. Those parents the task group met were generally looking for specific information about what support or opportunities they could access, who from and what the process is. This approach isn't always reflected on the Local Offer website. For example, the task group was not able to ascertain what the process is for a young person of 16 who wants go to a certain college. Interestingly, officers reported that parents

who took part in consultations on the Local Offer expressed a preference for information that **did** focus on outcomes. It may be that further consultation will be needed in order to check parents' views of the final result.

### Activities for young people with profound and/or multiple SEND

94. Those with profound and multiple disabilities often find it more difficult to find paid employment than those with less complex needs. Some young people with SEND may never be able to access paid employment due to the complexity of their needs. The task group regrets that time did not allow a review of the alternative activities available for this customer group in Wiltshire.

### Community Campuses

95. The task group received a briefing from the Head of Campus and Operational Models on how the needs of young people with SEND had been reflected in the council's Community Campus programme. It was reported that the design process for each community campus included consultation with young people, including those with SEND. Work was also being done to ensure that signage in community campuses is suitable for those with SEND i.e. produced in Braille and symbol typefaces as well as standard text.

## **Conclusions**

### Wiltshire's Local Offer

96. Caring for a young person with SEND can be very challenging; it is important that it is not made more difficult through a lack of clear information being available. A clear message from parents spoken to by the task group was the perceived lack of information available and a lack of clarity in how to access it. The following quotes sum-up how some parents feel about the this area and the importance that the council gets communications with families right: *"There are things going on but it's hard to find out about them", "I don't know where to start", and "There needs to be better sign-posting and information"*.
97. It is hoped that these kinds of comments will reduce as initiatives like My Plans, SEND Lead Workers and the Local Offer develop and become fully embedded. The Local Offer in particular represents a huge opportunity to create a one-stop resource for the parents of young people with SEND and the task group strongly supports its development. The current Local Offer represents a good start in providing clear and comprehensive information about resources, services, processes and points of contact. The task group acknowledges that the website only launched in September 2014 and a lot of work has clearly been done already. It will be important that resources are made available to continue its development and create the 'one stop shop' for information that young people with SEND and their families need.

### **(Recommendation 16)**

## Activities for young people with profound and/or multiple SEND

98. Because people with more profound SEND may not be able to access paid employment it is important that they have access to other activities that give meaning and purpose to their lives. It would seem important to follow through the person-centred approach used to plan post 16 education and employment for this group in the provision of appropriate and meaningful activity. This may be an area for further investigation by the committee in the future.

## Community Campuses

99. The task group does not know if the needs of people with SEND are being reflected in the design of community campuses other than Corsham, for example, through including Braille and symbol based signage. The committee may wish to investigate the extent to which people with SEND are using community campuses . (**Recommendation 17**)

## **Proposal**

100. That the Children's Select Committee endorses the final report and recommendations and refers them to the relevant Cabinet Members for response.

## **Recommendations**

**The task group recommends that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services;**

- 1. Provides a report describing how the council is developing the SEND Lead Worker role and responding to the concerns raised regarding engagement with young people and their families and the potential impact on important transitions;**
- 2. Provides a report showing the evidence base behind the council's increasing use of placements at local mainstream colleges rather than Independent Specialist Providers (ISPs) for young people with SEND. This should include data on cost, learner outcomes and destinations;**
- 3. Provides a report describing how the council ensures that all post-16 schools and colleges attended by Wiltshire students with SEND meet their educational and care needs;**
- 4. In order to reassure prospective students with SEND and their parents, asks officers to work with Wiltshire College to develop a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the significant developments to Wiltshire College's provision for students with SEND in recent years. This should include real life success stories demonstrating positive learner and life outcomes;**

5. Reassures the committee that clear information, advice and guidance on the post-16 SEND placement process, the decision making criteria, and the options for appealing decisions where necessary are readily available to all young people with SEND and parent carers;
6.
  - a) Reports how it will be ensured that the excellent Supported Internships scheme will expand in future years to provide an increasing number of employment opportunities for young people with SEND within the Council and other organisations;
  - b) Provides an update on the Supported Internships project in 12 months' time;
7. Provides an update report in 12 months' time on the work of the Wiltshire Employment Support Team (WEST) and the delivery of its agreed outcomes for 2015-16, including how awareness of this important service is raised amongst young people with SEND and their families;
8. Describes how the council is meeting its duties under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 in terms of creating employment opportunities for young people with SEND;
9. Works with other Cabinet Members to ensure that the council's procurement framework gives weighting, where appropriate, to organisations that offer employment opportunities for young people with SEND, such as through participating in the council's Supported Internships scheme;
10. Notes the work being undertaken by Devizes Area Board to promote employment opportunities for young people with SEND and, wherever possible, encourages other area boards to pursue relevant schemes.
11. Working with the Cabinet Member for Housing, provides further details of plans in place to develop independent housing with shared communal space that is suitable for young people with SEND, including details of any mapping work undertaken and projected numbers and timescales;
12. Working with the Cabinet Member for Housing, takes forward an engagement campaign with young people with SEND and their families to raise awareness of the housing options currently available and the plans for developing them. This should include:
  - a) Engagement with young people who are not yet old enough to live independently but who will be impacted in the future;

- b) Information that is relevant for young people with complex needs and their families;
  - c) An engagement event organised with the WPC and/or other advocacy groups as appropriate;
  - d) Information or links being included on the Local Offer website;
  - e) Wiltshire special schools to be given information on the housing work underway so it can be disseminated during their transition events;
13. Ensures that the children's social care and SEND teams are fully aware of the housing options available to young people with SEND and are able to offer comprehensive advice and guidance on how these can be accessed, including the Homes4Wiltshire Process and information on the proposed cluster apartment developments;
14. Working with the Cabinet Member for Housing, makes the 'easy read' Homes4Wiltshire application form available on the Homes4Wiltshire and Wiltshire Local Offer websites;
15. Provides an action plan describing how it will be ensured that:
- Young people with SEND aged 18+ have access to respite care in Wiltshire that is structured and develops their independent living skills alongside peers of a similar age;
  - Young people with SEND who exhibit challenging behaviour continue to have access to respite care in Wiltshire when they turn 18, meeting the requirements of the 'Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 To 25 Years' paragraph 3.52.
16. Confirms that adequate resources will be provided to ensure that the Wiltshire Local Offer becomes a fully up-to-date and comprehensive information source for young people with SEND and their families. It should enable easy-access to service users' questions about what support and opportunities are available to them, who provides them and how they can be accessed;
17. Working with the Cabinet Member for Campuses, Area Boards, Libraries, Leisure and Flooding, provides information showing to what extent community campuses are being used by people with SEND;

The task group also recommends that:

- 18. Children's Select Committee reviews the implementation of the task Group's recommendations in 12 months' time.

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## **Appendices**

None