

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

11 July 2023

**Portfolio Holder for Education and Children’s Services:
Councillor Fiona Baker**

Report Title	Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023 – 2026
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List of Approvers

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report introduces the West Northants Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities and Alternative Provision Strategy. This strategy provides the framework for how the Council and the local partnership will deliver its statutory duties for in relation to education, health and care for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.
- 1.2. This strategy includes the requirements of the joint OFSTED/CQC Local Area SEND Inspection framework and the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, published by the Department for Education in March 2023.

- 1.3. The strategy also includes the WNC Co-production Charter – this is a commitment for how the local partners will work together in line with our statutory requirements within the Children and Families Act 2014.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report introduces the new West Northants SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy which has been co-produced by West Northamptonshire Council and all strategic partners. This strategy sets out our ambitious vision, aims and priorities to ensure that we effectively identify and meet the needs of the children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), 0 to 25.
- 2.2 The proposed strategy includes details of how the Council and its partners will fulfil their statutory requirements and meet the needs of children with SEND in West Northants. At the core of the new strategy is a Co-production Charter; this is a commitment for all partners to make that demonstrates how we work in partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- 2.3 This report includes information about how the strategy has been co-produced with all partners, including children, young people and their families, and how the new strategy will be implemented and monitored.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that members of the Cabinet adopt the co-produced Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023-26. This Strategy includes the new WNC Co-production Charter.

4. Reason for Recommendations (NOTE: this section is mandatory and must be completed)

- To accord with OFSTED and CQC requirements as specified in the Local Area SEND Inspection framework and the Department for Education Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.
- To support the Council and its partners to improve outcomes for children with SEND
- To ensure an effective and consistent offer of support to children with SEND and their families across West Northants

5. Report Background

OFSTED/Care Quality Commission Inspection framework

- 5.1 The new OFSTED/Care Quality Commission Area SEND Inspection framework (in force since January 2023) sets out the evaluation criteria that inspectors use to make judgements, and

examples of the kinds of evidence they gather and activities they carry out to evaluate the local area's arrangements for children and young people with SEND.

- 5.2 Inspections evaluate how well members of a local area partnership work together to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. 'Local area partnership' refers to those in education, health and care who are responsible for the strategic planning, commissioning, management, delivery and evaluation of arrangements for children and young people with SEND who live in a local area.
- 5.3 A local area is the geographic footprint of a local authority - West Northants Local Area will be inspected as a local area – there will be a separate inspection of North Northants despite there being joint services (health/social care). The Council has the lead responsibility for the local area partnership.
- 5.4 When evaluating the local area partnership, inspectors focus mainly on how effectively the local authority (including Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT)) and Integrated Care Board (ICB) jointly plan, evaluate and develop services for children and young people with SEND. However, they also consider the duties of other area partners, which are set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 and described further in the SEND code of practice.

Department for Education Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan

- 5.5 In March 2023 the Department for Education published the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan. This document sets out the government's proposals to improve outcomes for children and young people; improve experiences for families, reducing the current adversity and frustration they face; and deliver financial sustainability.
- 5.6 Local area partnerships are expected to produce a response to the SEND and Alternative Provision Delivery Plan. In West Northants this is captured within the proposed SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The Council and our local partners do not have a joint understanding of needs of children with SEND locally, and do not have a joint approach to delivering services. A joint approach to delivering SEND services, including clarity about how our statutory obligations will be delivered is needed.
- 6.2 The Council proposed to the SEND Improvement Board (local multi-agency governance group) that a new SEND & Alternative Provision Strategy should be co-produced. This proposal stated that in order to address areas of under-performance, and to achieve the best outcomes for children with SEND and their families, the new approach must include all partners, especially children and their families.

Developing the new West Northants SEND and AP Strategy

- 6.3 The Council recognised the need for a new approach to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This began in summer 2022 with the recruitment of additional leaders within Children’s Services with a background and expertise in leading local SEND systems.
- 6.4 In November 2022, the Council secured additional funding to recruit a new SEND Improvement Team to lead the development of the new SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy. This team started in early 2023 and have led the co-production of the new SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy
- 6.5 The SEND Improvement Team, working in co-production with education, local health, social care leaders and Northampton Parents Forum Group (the local parent representative organisation) organised 20 different events to develop the new strategy.
- 6.6 These events involved over 800 children and young people with SEND, parents, carers, educational, health and social care professionals to identify the key priorities for the strategy. The feedback from these events has led to the draft Co-production Charter and SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy. These events have included: children/young people events, face to face events across Northamptonshire and online events and focus groups.
- 6.7 The Council received over 3,000 pieces of feedback through the co-production events. These have been collated to form the framework for the proposed strategy as set out below

Our Co-production Charter - Our co-production charter has five values:

- Communication
- Respect
- Transparency
- Working together
- Accountability

The Co-production Charter can be found in full on page 10 of Appendix A.

There are 3 Golden thread that run through the whole strategy and there are 6 key priority areas. These are detailed from pages 12 to 13 in Appendix A.

Golden Threads

1. Co-production
2. Inclusion
3. THRIVE

Priority Areas

1. **Accessibility** – Clear communication, reviewing and refining processes, developing the Local Offer, improving accessibility of transport and ensuring admissions is based on need.
2. **Resources** – Ensure sufficiency of jointly commissioned high-quality appropriate provision, use the expertise across all partners to develop best practice, use clear evidenced base to develop outcomes that build and monitor the effectiveness of our actions and use funding efficiently in a needs-led way
3. **Identification and Assessment** - Provide support and training in line with the SEND Ranges to ensure a consistency of approach, continuously improve the timeliness of assessment and reviews, provide support so that children and young people can effectively transition between settings and services.
4. **Training** – Provide training so that children and young people receive the right support, in the right place and at the right time within their inclusive communities; develop a shared understanding of SEND across all partners so they can identify needs early and understand appropriate strategies that can be used to support
5. **Alternative Provision** – Co-produce and implement an Alternative Provision Strategy, use trauma-informed practice, reduce the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions and identified and effectively meet pupils’ needs through the Alternative Provision offer.
6. **Preparation for Adulthood** - Provide training so all partners effectively support young people with their Preparation for Adulthood from the earliest stages, ensure pathways into adulthood are clear and young people can access clear information about support and services available, develop and deliver supported internships and ensure apprenticeships are accessible for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities or who are experiencing Alternative Provision.

6.8 To achieve our ambitions, we will publish transparent, detailed, and specific delivery plans that sit beneath this strategy. These are being co-produced through the SEND Improvement Board, which provides multi agency governance, including senior leaders from education, health, social care, parent/carers and the DfE.

6.9 The SEND Improvement Board will lead an annual review so that we can assure that it is effective and has the desired impact.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 The proposed SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy includes a priority of ‘Resources’. This details how the Council and its partners will best use the people, property and funding available to best meet children’s needs. This includes commitments around revenue and capital funding available to the Council, including the school capital programme which is being used to create over 500 new specialist education places.

7.1.2 The strategy also includes a commitment to improving the consistency of how needs-led funding is allocated. This is being managed through ongoing projects with all partners and will be reported through the SEND Improvement Board and West Northants Schools' Forum.

7.1.3 The proposed strategy also prioritises the use of best practice within all schools and early years providers to improve how children's needs are identified earlier, and where possible met within mainstream settings. This is a critical approach needed to manage the current Dedicated Schools Block funding available to the Council.

7.1.4 The strategy does not include specific saving targets. However, the strategy will support the Council to manage available budgets more effectively. This includes reducing legal and officer costs by investing in new staff, systems and processes.

7.2 **Legal**

7.2.1 The proposed SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy demonstrates how the local area partnership will deliver their statutory duties captured within the Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice.

7.3 **Risk**

7.3.1 At present, the Council is not delivering many statutory duties in relation to children with additional needs. This includes providing Educational Psychology and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) within set timescales. Without a coordinated approach, the Council and partners will not be able to prioritise these areas of work and improve timeliness and quality.

7.3.2 The new strategy will help the Council address historic under-performance in a consistent way, and by clearly allocating resources to meet identified needs. The new strategy will also include a detailed performance framework that will measure the impact of our work on children and the families.

7.4 **Consultation and Communications**

7.4.1 The draft strategy has been co-produced between the council and key stakeholders including children with SEND, their parents and carers, health and social care colleagues, teaching and non-teaching staff, governing bodies of schools, academies and nurseries, further education colleges and University colleagues at 20 events attended by 800 people and resulting in around 3,000 pieces of feedback.

7.4.2 The Council will continue to actively engage and involve all partners, keeping them updated on the process and seeking any further comments they may have. Once adopted, further communication activities will keep the public informed and updated on the progress being made towards achieving the outcomes of the strategy.

7.4.3 Any decision derived from this strategy that impacts on the Council's delivery of its statutory duties to children and their families will be subject to appropriate engagement and/or consultation.

7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 The development of the SEND and AP Strategy has been discussed at a number of OS Committee meetings as set out below. There is a SEND Task and Finish Group that has been created to have an overview of the implementation of the new SEND and AP Strategy.

7.5.2 People OS Committee on 21 November 2022 – the agenda papers and minutes are at: [Agenda for People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 21st November 2022, 6.00 pm - West Northamptonshire Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

7.5.3 There was also some discussion of SEND at the People OS Committee on 21 February 2023 ([Agenda for People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 21st February 2023, 6.00 pm - West Northamptonshire Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#))

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 The new SEND & AP Strategy will lead to a reduction of children needing to attend specialist provision that is based out of county. This should lead to a reduction in transport costs, and the delivery of home to school transport.

7.7 **Community Impact**

7.7.1 This strategy will deliver significant community impact for children, young people with SEND and Alternative Provision and their families, through the provision of co-produced, effective jointly commissioned services which reduce the current adversity and frustration they face.

8. **Background Papers**

8.1 None