

# **SCHOOLS FORUM**

**Meeting date: 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

**From: Daniel Barton  
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## **SEND REVIEW – RESOURCED PROVISION IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS**

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The County Council consulted during the summer term 2019 on a proposed new approach to Resourced Provision (RP). Broadly, the aim was to better match resources with need, provide improved geographical coverage of provision for children with SEND, ensure the type of need catered for more appropriately reflects demand, and build added flexibility into the system.
- 1.2 It was proposed that many existing designated RP settings would either have their designation changed or removed altogether, with new settings designated as appropriate. Staff employed by schools in RP would have transferred to the county council's employment, and in order to eliminate inefficiencies, the funding of unoccupied places ('ghost places') would cease. The system would operate on a hub and spoke basis, with Special Schools in each area allocated resources to distribute across RP settings.

### **2.0 OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

- 2.1 Whilst there was a general consensus during the consultation that some level of change is required, the proposals were not wholly supported by parents or practitioners. In particular, the central employment of RP staff was felt to be impractical and undesirable, and there was a general view that the proposals focused too heavily on ASD provision, to the detriment of children with other types of SEND.
- 2.2 There was, however, a general consensus that the LA should cease to fund unoccupied places, and that a more flexible system is needed. Equally, there was strong support for greater geographical coverage across the county in order to reduce travelling times and distances for children, and a sense that each area should have an identified 'pathway' from primary into secondary provision.

### **3.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 3.1 It will be recommended to the Cabinet in November that the original proposals should not be implemented, given the feedback received. It remains the case that some individual existing settings would have their RP designation changed, in many cases to expand the range of needs catered for. Some new settings would be proposed, and there would be discussions with settings over the coming months to determine what exactly the provision will look like in the future.
- 3.2 As part of the new proposal, unoccupied places would no longer – as far as possible – be funded, though there is a recognition that this may sometimes be unavoidable given the lag between the census (for maintained schools) and the notification to ESFA of academy numbers, and the delivery of funding. No unoccupied places would be funded as of right, however.
- 3.3 There would be no hub and spoke model as part of this new proposal, though the expertise available in special schools will be invaluable in ensuring the best possible RP is available. Staff would continue to be employed by the individual settings rather than the LA.
- 3.4 Central to the new proposal would be the introduction of contractual agreements between the county council and individual RP settings. These would incorporate a review/performance management mechanism, and would be time-limited, we expect for 3 years. This would allow the county council to react to changing levels of types of demand much more quickly than previously. Model agreements are currently being drawn up, but will inevitably require refinement in discussion with providers.
- 3.5 It is still anticipated that the roll-out of the new RP system would begin in September 2020, though it may not be pragmatic to have all proposed changes in place at that date. In particular, academy place numbers and funding will be decided in November on the basis of the existing RP arrangements, and it may not, therefore, be possible to implement substantial changes in those settings until the following year.

### **4.0 ANTICIPATED COSTS**

- 4.1 We expect that the new proposal would be cost neutral. Whilst there would be additional settings, these will be established to improve geographical coverage rather than increase numbers. It cannot be wholly discounted, however, that the presence of RP nearer home will encourage more parents to seek places there. The removal of funding for unoccupied places should ensure that resources are used more effectively and efficiently.
- 4.2 In terms of home to school transport, the existence of more settings closer to more children should, logically, reduce costs. Again, however, it cannot be guaranteed that better geographical coverage will not lead to an increase in uptake and, therefore, in transport costs.

### **5.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 Schools Forum is recommended to endorse this approach.

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*17<sup>th</sup> October 2019*

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