

## UPDATE ON DEVON'S SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES (SEND) TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

### Report of the Director of Children & Young People's Futures

#### Recommendations:

- a) Note the update on Devon's SEND Transformation Programme.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1. In September 2023, the Council and its partners agreed a new approach to delivering improvements through the SEND Transformation Programme which brings together post Ofsted/CQC improvement work and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit management actions.

#### 2. Update on SEND Transformation Programme

- 1.2. The focus over the Autumn term has been on re-establishing governance and accountability and laying the foundations through clear milestones, delivery plans and additional project management resources to drive forward the improvements and larger transformational work required.
- 1.3. Now that increased grip and control is in place, the local area partnership can move towards implementation at pace. In 2024, there are several delivery milestones which will be met which include launch of the Ordinarily Available Provision toolkit, improved systems and processes for statutory education health and care assessment and review processes; redesign of education support services and; increased sufficiency through new resource bases and special school places.
- 1.4. Progress since the previous update
- 1.5. *Review of Education Health and Care assessment process*  
Process mapping completed and challenges identified, including non-value steps. Recommendations provided to DCC senior officers and an action plan in place to deliver improvements.
- 1.6. *New SEND Advisory Team*  
4 x SEND Advisory Teachers working in localities to with SENCOs, leaders of teaching and learning and teaching staff to build knowledge, skill and confidence in developing and embedding high quality, whole school approaches to SEND and Inclusion. This team will support the roll out of the Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) toolkit.

- 1.7. *Two new resource bases approved*  
The Regional Director for the South West (DfE) has approved the establishment of two Resource Bases at Brixington Primary Academy - for up to 10 learners with social, emotional and mental health needs - and at Holsworthy Community College - for up to 10 learners with Communication and Interaction Needs. These are expected to be operating from September 2024.
- 1.8. *Educational Psychology Service resumes early support work for schools*  
The educational psychology service has returned to early intervention work with 100 targeted schools and settings that have high inclusion needs. EP support will include a termly School Review Consultation (funded by DCC) to problem-solve key priorities and challenges linked to SEND. This will aim to be a multi-agency meeting with representatives from other SEN support and Inclusion services.
- 1.9. *Early Years Transitions*  
Test and learn underway with 100 children and 39 schools with the aim of building a picture around OAP and developing skills and confidence in making adjustments to practice. Overall positive response in terms of the offer, recognition of the gap in support (e.g. expectations in relation to phonics)

### **3. Update on reaching a Safety Valve agreement**

- 1.10. The Council submitted its DSG Deficit Management Plans to the Department for Education (DfE) on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The DfE has reviewed the proposal and they are positive about the delivery plans, though recognise the high risk involved, much look other Safety Valve agreements nationally. The DfE did not require the Council to make any further amendments to its delivery plans for the final deadline of 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024.
- 1.11. Each agreement reached between the Council and the DfE has different dynamics and results in varying levels of support being made available. The Council will continue to work with the DfE on options to fund the cumulative deficit which will require a local contribution. The full extent of the contribution required by the Council will not be known until negotiations are concluded but if successful is likely to be significant and span many years.
- 1.12. The Council was also invited to bid for High Needs Block Capital funding to support the delivery of the DSG deficit management plan. A bid has been submitted which supports an expansion in mainstream further education places, the opening of the new special school In Ivybridge and specialist satellite provision in West Devon. The total cost of proposals is £10.2m - £8.7m bid and £1.5m Council matched funding.
- 1.13. The DSG deficit management plans form part of Devon's SEND Transformation Programme, which is a partnership approach. The Council alone cannot address the system wide issues - though it recognises its own weaknesses - but is keen to work with partners to deliver on these plans.

Partnership work with schools will be crucial in managing the current and future demand and reaching a financially sustainable position.

- 1.14. Some of challenges that schools and the Council need to focus on, by working in partnership, to deliver these plans include but are not limited to;
- Inconsistent approach to inclusive provision in schools which meets the needs of children and young people with SEND
  - Poor early support/intervention offer, forcing families and professionals down the route of an EHCNA
  - A focus on more funding rather than meeting needs and improving outcomes for children and young people.

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