
Meeting: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 23 November 2010
Subject: Future Delivery of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Services in Central Bedfordshire

Report of: Cllr Mrs Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder Children's Services

Summary: The report sets out the direction of travel for the delivery of provision for Special Education Needs in Central Bedfordshire. It focuses on the development of provision that will meet children and young people's needs in Special Schools and Special Educational Needs support services. It takes account of the direction of travel set out in the current Special Educational Needs Green Paper. It also gives early indication of two statutory consultations that will be the subject of a more detailed report to the Committee in December 2010.

Contact Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The provision of effective and efficient local services for Special Education Needs forms a key element in the Central Bedfordshire Children's Services. It aligns with priorities and programmes on Early Intervention and on transforming learning and transforming the Council's relationship with schools. It will support the cross cutting responsibilities for Health that will be determined by the anticipated new responsibilities for the Council in making arrangements for the new Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The proposal relates to the Council's Key Priority:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

Financial:

The most significant financial impact will be in reduction of 'Out of Authority' and agency provision for Central Bedfordshire children. There is currently pressure on this budget which could increase significantly with the changing demographics if there is no change to the way the Council offers current provision.

Options 2 for the Special Schools could deliver savings of at first estimate £91,465. Option 3 could deliver savings at first estimate of £197,032. There will need to be an alteration of the lump sum of the delegated school formula via the School Forum. Subject to Members' views, more details on these options will be given in the December report. This change would be subject to statutory consultation.

Discontinuation of the current dyslexia provision as set out in the report could deliver a full year saving of £58,000. Subject to member's views, this change would be subject to statutory consultation.

The Executive is currently consulting upon a saving of £128k in 2011/12 and £272k in 2012/13 in the Special Educational Needs area. Any resultant changes to Special Educational Needs will be made when the Council has approved its budget in February 2011. Proposals other than those set out above are not statutory changes and therefore do not require Executive decisions and formal consultations. However they will require the views of schools in their development, particularly when it is expected that schools will take on services and separate statutory staffing consultations.

The direction of travel of these changes set out in the report are set out to give the Scrutiny Committee visibility on those services that will be realigned if the Council's budget proposals, currently out to consultation, are agreed. The budget reductions will be applied on a pro rata basis across the service in 2010/2011 and thresholds to access the service will be aligned accordingly within statutory obligations.

Any commissioning from schools will be made in accordance with the Council's Children's Services Commissioning Strategy. Some savings will be generated by the reduction in management costs though the restructuring and relocation of the management of SEN and disability peripatetic services into schools.

Legal:

Any change to the statutory operation of a school or designated provision within a school requires formal consultation on published proposals within due process. Additionally, parents may seek to challenge the position of the council on individual cases by application to the SEN and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). Statutory consultation applies to the proposals relating to the special schools and to the dyslexia provision in Priory Middle School.

Risk Management:

The SEN "Improvement Test" which is a professionally based quality test, will be applied against any proposed changes. Critical, however, will be the continuation of the successful work to reduce the numbers of cases taken to the SEN and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). The confidence of parents will need to be retained throughout the changes.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Full consultation with existing staff and the Trade Unions will be undertaken in accordance with existing procedures and best practice.

Equalities/Human Rights:

An on going Equality Impact Assessment is being developed and will draw on the SEN Improvement Test.

Community Safety:

N/A

Sustainability:

The development of local provision to meet local need, matched to analysis and understanding of the changing demographic, is the best way to ensure sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. It is recommended that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the proposals for the future delivery of Special Educational Needs in Central Bedfordshire as set out in the report and note that they relate to the ongoing budget consultation process and staffing consultations.**
- 2. Members are asked for their views in particular on the options outlined in the report regarding the Special Schools and the Dyslexia provision at Priory Middle School. These changes will be subject to an Executive report and statutory consultation. These proposals will be the subject of a further report to this Committee in December 2010 when detailed discussion meetings will have been undertaken with Governing Bodies of the relevant schools.**

Background and Context

1. On 6 June 2008, the Central Bedfordshire Transition Task Force considered and adopted the recommendations of the Review of Special Needs carried out by the former Bedfordshire County Council. This included the recommendation to develop 3 Area Special Schools in the Central Bedfordshire area. It was also recommended that specialist provision for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) should not form part of the Area Special School brief. A staged approach was recommended, giving consideration to basing Area Special School provision in the east, the south and the west of Central Bedfordshire.
2. In March 2009, the School Forum agreed the changes to the funding formula for special schools in order to target funding appropriately to the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties were by then being educated more successfully in mainstream settings, and an increasing number of parents were choosing mainstream education for their child, even when they met the admissions guidance criteria for a special school.
3. On 23 June 2009, the Executive agreed to initiate a consultation on the options for the future of special schooling in the East of Central Bedfordshire. On 8 December 2009 the Executive considered the responses to the consultation and supported the proposed merger of Hitchmead and Sunnyside schools to create an Area Special School. Statutory proposals led to the decision to cease to maintain Hitchmead Foundation Special School from 31 August 2010.
4. Related proposals to make a prescribed alteration to Sunnyside Community Special School to become an Area Special School for pupils with complex needs aged 3-19 across the two existing sites from 1 September 2010 were approved by the Executive on 8 April 2010.
5. On 1 September 2010 the new Ivel Valley Area Special School opened across the two sites.
6. On 1 September 2009 a specialist Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision was opened at St Swithun's Lower School, as had been recommended in the SEN Review to make provision in the East of Central Bedfordshire. As a continuation of this, Holmemead Middle School opened the Middle School specialist ASD provision on 1 September 2010.
7. In March 2010, the Executive agreed the Education Vision for Central Bedfordshire, with specific reference to Inclusion and Special Needs. This included reducing out-of-authority specialist placements by re-allocating resources to make provision to meet needs locally; developing the concept of Area Special Schools with a broader role for delivering services to mainstream schools; championing the needs of all pupils (including underperforming and vulnerable groups); and supporting federations, trusts and partnerships in developing locally delivered targeted services to support prevention, early identification and effective interventions.

8. The Vision is currently being implemented through four area reviews, the first of which commenced in April 2010 in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area and on which the Committee have received verbal updates. As part of this work, a project group has been formed of Council officers and nominated representatives of schools in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. This group is undertaking the early work of analysis of inputs to the review, including data related to SEN and inclusion, of current provision and of the impact of service challenges and new policies developed by the coalition Government.
9. Headteachers of the special schools in this area are also being consulted to ensure their involvement in this process. Headteachers and officers are also working with Governors. This data analysis forms part of the report on Transforming Learning scheduled for this Committee in January 2011.
10. The proposals and recommendations in this report build on the aspirations set out in the Council's vision and reflect the changing role of the Council. The responsibility will increasingly be with schools to identify and commission the support and advice for pupils with SEN from other schools in their partnership, including special schools outreach services or other providers. The Council will broker this where appropriate and will maintain a focus on key statutory processes.
11. A review and mapping process of current services and provision has been undertaken, assessing provision against the recommendations, proposals and principles outlined in:
 - the Ofsted Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Review report (September 2010);
 - the Green Paper: Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, which is currently in consultation and due in November 2010;
 - Achieving Equity and Excellence for Children (Department of Health Sept 2010).
12. The key changes are outlined below.
13. The Ofsted Special Educational Needs and Disability Review report (September 2010) recommended that changes in the system focus on:
 - improving the quality of assessment;
 - ensuring that where additional support is provided, it is effective;
 - improving teaching and pastoral support early on so that additional provision is not needed later;
 - developing specialist provision and services strategically so that they are available to maintained and independent schools, academies and colleges;
 - simplifying legislation so that the system is clearer for parents, schools and other education and training providers;
 - ensuring that schools do not identify pupils as having special educational needs when they simply need better teaching; and

- ensuring that accountability for those providing services focuses on the outcomes for the children and young people concerned.
14. The expected principles of the Green Paper: Children and Young People With Special Educational Needs and Disabilities as set out in the consultation documentation are:
- greater transparency so that parents know how their child is to be supported, what provision is available including special and mainstream school, how decisions are made and how their child is progressing;
 - increased involvement of parents in decision-making;
 - more effective use of limited resources;
 - less bureaucracy to free professionals up to spend more time with children and families;
 - high expectations; and
 - more local solutions to enable localities to develop provision that makes the best use of staff and specialist resources.
15. The Green Paper will consider how the following will be best achieved:
- Better educational outcomes and life chances.
 - Better early intervention.
 - Greater choice for parents.
 - Public services centred on the needs of the family and child in the round, joining up support from education, social care and health.
 - Streamlining assessment systems
16. **Achieving Equity and Excellence for Children (Department of Health September 2010)**
17. This paper sets out the direction of travel for the NHS and makes specific reference to improving services and outcomes for children with SEN and disabilities. It supports the proposed principles of the SEN Green Paper, particularly in relation to listening to and involving children and families in decision making about services. It will provide a framework of responsibilities within which different professionals, agencies and organisations will work together to produce the best results for children and families.

Benchmarking data for Special Education Needs

18. Building on the future requirements as outlined above, good progress has been made in improving the statistical performance of Central Bedfordshire Council against similar authorities. High statement numbers is not considered good practice. The most recent benchmarking data shows that the statistical neighbour average performance has been achieved, with the overall number of statements in CBC schools reducing from 3.1% in 2007 to 2.6% in 2010.

19. 1043 children are currently supported through statements of Special Educational Need in Central Bedfordshire. A further 35 are currently within the statutory assessment process, with statements due for completion by 31 December 2010.

Exclusions

20. The work of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is the subject of a separate report to the Committee.

Permanent Exclusions

21. Using Ofsted's methodology in its inspections of Children's Services, in 2008/2009 Central Bedfordshire would have been "in line" with both Statistical Neighbours and the national average. There has been an improvement in performance compared to statistical neighbours from 2008/2009 to 2009/2010, with a reduction in the number of pupils excluded in all phases, with none in special schools.

Fixed Term Exclusions

22. There has been a reduction overall in the number of pupils excluded in 2009/2010, with fixed term exclusions nearly halved in special schools (2008/09 - 173, 2009/10 - 98).
23. Some of this improvement has been achieved through Local Authority challenge and support and through the funded Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships across schools taking responsibility for making provision locally to meet the needs of their pupils. Schools will build on the work through their Trusts, Federations and Partnerships.

Out of Authority Specialist School Provision

24. 23 children and young people are currently placed in specialist residential schools out of Central Bedfordshire and 2 in non-residential specialist schools. 3 of the 23 pupils are due to finish their schooling in July (2011).
25. The cost of this external provision ranges from £31,000k to £187,000 for each child, although one particularly complex case costs £300,000 per annum. Some of these costs are shared between Children's Services and the PCT. More work is on-going to ensure that the arrangements between the two services are clear with full visibility on financial accountability.
26. 5 out of authority placements were directed by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). 4 of those placed by Tribunal and 7 other children and young people have regular speech and language therapy and/or occupational therapy specified on their statement that is not currently provided or funded by local health services. Discussions with health providers are underway to resolve this.
27. Post school learners who access independent specialist colleges have become the responsibility of the Young People's Learning Agency and are funded via a regional planning group.

28. For the very small numbers of the most complex children and young people, those with very severe learning difficulties, Autism and extreme challenging behaviour, local provision may not be a cheaper option. However, in general, the outcomes for children and young people should be better if they are able to receive appropriate education and care locally to Central Bedfordshire as their families are able to remain involved.
29. For a very small number of children who require a very specialist environment that cannot be efficiently replicated locally, provision in a neighbouring Council may be identified, for example a school with a total sign language environment for those profoundly deaf children that require it. All statements of Special Educational Needs for pupils currently in “out of Authority placements” are reviewed annually. At the time of the annual review, consideration is given as to whether their needs can now be met within Central Bedfordshire.

Area Special Schools

30. Ivel Valley now provides the agreed model of special schooling in the East of Central Bedfordshire across two sites. Ivel Valley school is co-located with the Maythorn residential provision for children with disabilities, which has resulted in the Council being able to meet the needs of some very vulnerable learners who might otherwise have been placed out of Authority.
31. Exploration of whether the integrated approach to the most complex pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), ASD and very challenging behaviour currently available between Maythorn and Ivel Valley School could be replicated using the Kingfisher site adjacent to Hillcrest School is ongoing.
32. The area review of Dunstable and Houghton Regis involves Glenwood (Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) 3-11 years), Hillcrest (SLD/PMLD 11-19 years) and Weatherfield (Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) 7-16). As part of this, consideration is being given to the steps required to achieve the agreed model of area special schools for the South of Central Bedfordshire.

33. As of September 2010 the numbers in these schools are:

Glenwood:	75 (including 2 Luton and 1 Bedford Borough)
Hillcrest:	64 (including 9 Luton and 1 Bedford Borough)
Weatherfield:	88 (including 4 Luton, 1 Bucks, 1 Bedford Borough and 1 Herts)
Total:	227

34. 27 Central Bedfordshire pupils are currently attending Grange School (MLD) in Kempston, and 31 attending St John’s School (SLD/PMLD) in Kempston, most of whom live geographically closer to Kempston than to Central Bedfordshire special schools. There are 29 Central Bedfordshire pupils at Ridgeway School for children with physical disabilities in Kempston.

35. The Bedfordshire Special School Headteacher Group agreed, as a benchmark for the review carried out by Bedfordshire County Council, that an all-age special school needed a pupil population of a minimum of 90 to effectively and efficiently deliver the full curriculum to the full age range. This is a guide, not an absolute figure.
36. There is an expected increase in the pupil population in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area to 2031 (plan period) of approximately 48% per age group, based on the latest housing figures. As Area Special Schools will serve catchments beyond the immediate area, housing increases in other areas of Central Bedfordshire will need to be taken into account.
37. Currently 0.85% of pupils aged 3-19 attend special schools, both in and outside of Central Bedfordshire. If the raising of the participation age is implemented, this will have implications for the continued provision for learners who currently attend Oak Bank and Weatherfield schools and leave at 16. As the population increases, an increase will be required in the amount of local provision available in special schools.
38. As set out in the Education Vision, potential models of delivery for education 14-19 and up to 25 for learners who have learning difficulties and disabilities are being considered. Special Schools are now represented on the 14-19 Strategy Group and are working with colleges and Upper Schools to support transition and ensure the delivery of a range of appropriate courses that meet the needs and aspirations of the most vulnerable students. If this approach is successful, more post school learners will be maintained in local provision that meets their needs.

Proposed options for the delivery of Area Special Schooling in Dunstable/Houghton Regis

39. There are a number of early options being identified for Schools in this area. This will be the subject of a further report in December.

(a) Option 1:

To federate all three Special Schools under 1 Governing Body – this is broadly the maintenance of the status quo with some changes to leadership and governance.

The schools would still retain their DfE number, would have separate budgets and would be inspected separately. Federated schools can consider Academy status when DfE open up the route to Academy for non outstanding schools and special schools or if an Ofsted rated outstanding school is in the Federation.

Savings would be minimal.

Advantages:

- The governing body would be taking account of the interests of all of the schools and their pupils.
- This could provide some flexibility for school organisation and delivery of the curriculum.
- The governing body would be able to move money from one school to another to meet priorities.

Disadvantages:

- This may not achieve anything more than is already possible with the existing configuration.
- This would not deliver the proposed model of Area Special School.
- There would be no saving in the “lump sum” element of the delegated budget as set out in the School Funding Formula.
- Although there are no costs or efficiencies on this model, no change could lead to the Weatherfield School becoming non- viable in the future if more pupils with these needs are educated successfully in mainstream provision.

(b) Option 2:

To merge Glenwood and Hillcrest into an all age Area Special School through the closure of one school and the prescribed alteration of the other under one headteacher across the two sites **or** the closure of both and opening of a new school across both sites. Legislation requires that competition would be held to open a new school. This option retains Weatherfield as an MLD School.

Advantages

- As most pupils currently transition from Glenwood to Hillcrest it is anticipated that this might be welcomed by stakeholders.
- This would achieve an Area Special School in the South of Central Bedfordshire, providing for the mixture of very complex needs and equivalent to Ivel Valley School.
- Due to existing expertise at Glenwood and Hillcrest schools, this would provide the specialist ASD provision currently lacking for Central Bedfordshire pupils with MLD and complex ASD. Pupils with Special Educational Needs who are assessed as requiring this type of provision currently travel to a Bedford Borough School.

- This option could provide a first step towards one Area Special School in this geographical area that would make provision for the South and West of Central Bedfordshire.

Disadvantages

- Closing both schools and opening as one may invoke more opposition if the intent is misunderstood. A clear communication strategy that is led and supported by the affected schools would be required which means that these schools would need to support this option.
- This option is not designed to resolve the lack of post 16 provision for pupils with MLD, although they could transfer if appropriate to the newly merged school at 16.
- This option would not achieve the aim of moving away from separately designated schools for SLD and MLD to a model of Area Special Schools as in the case of Ivel Valley Area Special School.
- This option could create difficulties with admissions as some pupils could meet the admissions guidance for both an Area Special School and an MLD School. There is a risk that some parents from the east of Central Bedfordshire may opt for the MLD school instead of the local provision at Ivel Valley School. This could increase transport costs.
- The viability of a stand alone MLD schools would be an issue.
- This model would not provide an equitable model across Central Bedfordshire.

(c) Option 3:

To merge the 3 schools through the closure of two and the prescribed alteration of 1 across all 3 sites initially **or** the closure of all 3 schools and the opening of one new school across 3 or 2 sites. It would be necessary to undertake a competition to open a new school.

Advantages

- This would achieve the agreed model of Area Special School, and is likely to provide the best basis for long term sustainability and service provision.
- This would be consistent with the Members' decision regarding Ivel Valley Area Special School and provide an equivalent model to that in the east of Central Bedfordshire.
- Due to the existing expertise at Glenwood and Hillcrest schools, this would provide the specialist Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision currently lacking for Central Bedfordshire pupils with MLD and complex ASD. Pupils with Special Educational Needs who are assessed as requiring this type of provision currently travel to a Bedford Borough School.

- This would provide a substantive centre for professionals from health and other services to support future provision for children with complex needs.
- The size of the school would provide a model for dispersed leadership that would provide for the growth of future leaders in SEN.
- This could provide an integrated model for coordinating specialist peripatetic services and outreach to support the most vulnerable children wherever they are receiving education as part of an extended role for special schools.
- This would provide focussed professional development for all staff working with the most vulnerable children 0-19 and post 19 that supports continuity and progression and aids transition into the next stage of their lives.
- Subject to the Council's Asset Management Policy, future consideration could be given to the disposal of one site and a possible future use of capital finance to extend the buildings on another site to create a two sited school (primary/secondary). That would reflect the model in the East Of the Council. It should be noted that should the Special Schools become an academy or form a Trust, then the schools would have ownership of the land.

Disadvantages

- More objections are possible from parent groups and governing bodies if one or more of the schools are not in agreement to this strategy, or if the intent of this option is misunderstood.

40. It is recognised that schools themselves could also consider options such as applications to be Trusts or Federations or an Academy. Between the November and December meetings, further soundings will need to be taken with Headteachers and Governing Bodies before a further report is brought to the Committee.

Special School Outreach

41. The model of special school outreach has been realigned in 2010/2011 following review of existing commissions under the Council's emerging policy for Children's Services. Outreach will now be located in 3 schools and sub commissioned where appropriate (Ivel Valley, Glenwood, and Oak Bank). This model has been agreed by participating schools for one year only due to it being subject to any changes recommended by the SEN Green Paper and the review of the Direct School Grant allocations.
42. If the overall strategy outlined in this paper is adopted, agreement will be sought from the schools forum that the resource to support outreach be incorporated into the formula for those special schools providing it, enabling them to develop the capacity to provide outreach.

Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development (BESD)

43. Oak Bank School buildings require significant capital investment to make them fit for purpose as a school for pupils with the most challenging social, emotional and behavioural needs. In order for the school to fulfil its potential to offer support to those pupils with emotional and behavioural needs alongside the new commissioned Pupil Referral Unit, (PRU) consideration may need to be given to the following:
- Whilst the provision in the school is judged to be good, consideration may need to be given in the medium or long term to the relocation of the provision currently at Oak Bank to a more central location and in a different building if one becomes available. There is unlikely to be further capital available in the near future to bring the buildings up to a higher standard. Oak Bank staff and Governors will be fully consulted.
 - Oak Bank school staff and governors will also be consulted on the future direction of the re-commissioned Pupil Referral Unit, particularly in the area of therapeutic provision.

Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships

44. Central Bedfordshire supports 3 Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships, which provide school to school support (in Dunstable/Houghton Regis, in Leighton/Linslade and in Sandy/Biggleswade based on levels of social deprivation). This has historically been Grant funded to enable partnerships of schools to address the needs of pupils locally, reducing exclusions and increasing attendance.
45. There has been a significant reduction in numbers and days lost to fixed term exclusions as a consequence of this and a reduction in permanent exclusions in some places. High numbers of permanent exclusions have been linked to particular schools and they are challenged accordingly.
46. This grant funding has supported the development of good practice but the funding has now ceased. This activity will now need to be absorbed within the activity of schools via Trusts, Federations or Partnerships or as part of the commission for the PRU if possible, subject to budgetary provision and the commissioning process.

Specialist provision for children with special educational needs in their early years

47. Early identification and intervention for children with SEN and disabilities at 0 to 5 is important to their development, particularly for those children with the most complex needs.

48. The current provision, which is shared with Bedford Borough Council via a Service Level Agreement, will come to an end in December 2011 as previously planned. Staff are being consulted on the proposal that two area teams of 1 specialist teacher and 2 specialist support staff who transfer to Central Bedfordshire Council under the disaggregation arrangements will continue to provide support in collaboration with families, and other services, including health services. This provision will be subject to further review if the budget saving is approved.
49. This is consistent with the proposed principles of the Government Green Paper and local priorities. This will also increase the capacity of early years settings to meet the needs of the children. It is proposed that these staff will be located within communities, probably based at children's centres, and managed professionally through the Ivel Valley and Glenwood special schools through a commission from the Council. Consultations with the staff have commenced regarding their transfer to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Visual Impairment Service

50. The proposal is to locate this service in a special school, providing the support as outreach to those pupils in mainstream schools with significant visual impairments. It is proposed that the teacher for visual impairment leads and coordinates the work of the specialist support staff who work directly with Braille and pre-Braille users in their local schools and settings. This team will also provide training for school staff to enable them to meet the needs of individual children. A commission will be circulated to determine which special school wishes to host this service.

Music Therapy

51. As this service is predominantly bought back by the special schools, the special schools have been asked to work together to consider how in the future they might wish to commission this work.

Education Psychology

52. The Education Psychology (EP) service in Central Bedfordshire has recently been refocused to target provision to :
- Early Years (0-5 years) – this involves contributing to the early identification and assessment of needs, including statutory assessment when appropriate to do so.
 - Children in vulnerable circumstances - this involves pupils who are at serious risk of permanent exclusion, those who are looked after, and those at School Action Plus of the SEN Code of Practice who may go on to need Statutory Assessment.
 - Statutory processes.
 - Critical Incident support.

53. A further review will be undertaken in the light of the SEN Green Paper to assess the extent to which EP services may be further refined while ensuring that critical and statutory services continue to be provided.

Advisory Support

54. It is proposed that the Advisory Support for Speech and Language and Autism are relocated to be managed through the Outreach Special Schools. Some commissioned work is already on going with Special Schools.

Statutory Assessment team

55. This team conducts the statutory assessments of pupils which remains part of the core work of the Council. The provision made by this team will be reviewed in the light of the outcomes of the SEN Green Paper in relation to early identification, streamlining assessment processes and reducing bureaucracy.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder

56. Central Bedfordshire Council has recently developed specialist provision in the East of the Council area in one Lower School and one Middle School.
57. In the future, there will be a need to develop an Upper School provision. This will be developed in consultation with the schools currently hosting these provisions and their Governing Bodies. There are currently Upper School provisions at Samuel Whitbread Upper School and Community College in Shefford and Manshead Upper School in Dunstable. Budgetary provision will need to be made available in consultation with the School Forum.

Dyslexia Provision

58. Central Bedfordshire currently has 1 middle school provision for Dyslexia at Priory Middle School. There are currently 3 pupils in the provision at Priory Middle School which is funded for 7 pupils.
59. When the pupils leave, this arrangement completes guarantees given by the legacy Council that pupils could continue in this provision. Provision will now be made across all schools and the Council has offered training to both teachers and teaching assistants in the accredited Dyslexia training course available through University of Northampton and delivered locally. This course is now funded by Central Government.
60. The Council has provided support and training in delivering proven models of literacy intervention. It is therefore proposed that statutory notices are published to formally discontinue this provision, which currently costs £57,960 per annum. It is also proposed that the school may wish to sell their expertise to Trusts, Federations and Partnerships. This would be for the governing body of the school to determine and would not be part of a commission from the Council.

Language Provision

61. The provision for language specialism at Heathwood Lower School is currently managed through the Council. It is proposed that further discussions are held with the school to devolve this responsibility to the school.

Hearing Impaired Provisions

62. Central Bedfordshire currently has 3 Provisions for those pupils whose hearing impairments are so severe they have a statement of SEN and require regular input from a qualified Teacher of the Deaf. The peripatetic service currently also provides the advice and support where appropriate for children 0-19 in their local school or setting.
63. Developing these provisions in Central Bedfordshire has led to a reduction in the number of pupils accessing specialist provision out of the Council area. As a result of improvements in treatment for hearing loss, this need may decrease in the future. It is proposed that a commissioning is offered to schools who may wish to offer this service.

Ensuring that schools develop expertise

64. The Council's relationship with its schools is changing in the light of national policy. Schools will be increasingly responsible for working through Trusts, Federations and Partnerships and commissioning their own support. The Council will maintain a small core team to offer statutory provisions. It will also retain its role to intervene where schools are notified by Ofsted or evaluated as a result of School Improvement partner visits to be of concern.
65. There is national advice for schools and other settings in identifying the special educational needs of children and young people, and intervening appropriately to meet these needs. The Guidance on the Graduated Response to SEN has recently been reissued. This sets out what should be provided by settings and schools for children and young people at each stage of the national SEN Code of Practice. This has contributed to the decrease in the number of requests for statutory assessments as schools gain expertise in fulfilling their role. Although the national Code of Practice may change as a consequence of the Green Paper, this tool provides a useful guide to settings and schools on what they can do to address the needs of the pupils for which they are responsible.

Conclusion/Next steps

66. The Overview and Scrutiny committee are requested to note and comment upon the provisions for special educational needs. With the exception of these proposals which require statutory consultation, the overall provision for Special Educational Needs will be implemented in accordance with a staffing review and in accordance with Children's Services Commissioning Strategy when the budget for the Council is known and approved in February 2011.

67. For those proposals which require statutory notice and an Executive decision, Members are asked to comment on the future direction of the three special schools in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and the provision for pupils with dyslexia at Priory Middle School. These two changes would then require Executive approval and the publication of statutory notices.
68. The report on the future configuration of the Area Special Schools and the Dyslexia provision will be part of a report for the Executive on 11 January 2011.

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Central Bedfordshire Transition Task Force Group on SEN, Children's Services 2008/2009.

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands