



Report of the Director of Education

Education & Skills Service Transformation Committee
13 December 2023

Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places

Purpose:	The report presents information regarding the Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places programme in relation to the current position and future plans.
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For Information	

1. Background

- 1.1 The purpose of Service Transformation Committees is to contribute to the ongoing development of the Council's agreed transformation activities (specifically in relation to the council's corporate plan, policy commitments, Corporate Transformation Plan, and Medium-Term Financial Plan) for consideration and adoption by Cabinet Members, Cabinet and/or Council as appropriate.
- 1.2 At the meeting held on 14 June 2023, it was agreed that Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places would be a key area for consideration by the Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee.
- 1.3 This report will provide an update on progress following the Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee meeting on 27 September 2023 and will outline how current data trends have been considered in order to inform the plans.

2. Progress since last Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee

- 2.1 Three main areas of progress will be covered in this report. They are the data collation; change team progress and an update on pilot projects.
- 2.2. A comprehensive data collation activity has taken place to identify current and predicted trends. The data was analysed and considered in line with identified current risks and recent publications to provide an overview of the current position and direction of travel. An overview of these findings will be provided in this report.
- 2.3 Change Team met for an “away day” during the Autumn Term to ensure dedicated and comprehensive consideration the collated data and consider the proposed model. The Change Team also considered funding arrangements to implement the proposed model and agreed next steps. These proposed steps will also be outlined in this report and the committee’s views in relation to them would be welcomed.
- 2.4 The transport pilot project has concluded and the Dylan Thomas Cluster Enhanced Project has moved into the next phase and updates on both will be provided in this report.

3. Data collation and research

- 3.1 A range of data was collated from a number of different sources which included:
 - Local Health Board (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Speech and Language Therapists; Neurodevelopmental Pathways).
 - detailed data analysis from an identified cluster of schools relating to all learners with ALN within that cluster
 - data from the Regional Partnership Board, particularly in relation to the regional Autism strategy.
 - data from early years panels and providers
 - data relating to looked after children
 - data on the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team performance.
- 3.2 This data has been analysed and key themes identified. The data analysis identified an increasing trajectory for all different areas of need. It also identified that our current model struggles to manage current numbers and will need amending to accommodate future projected levels of demand. This makes a strong case for change in relation to the Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places programme.

Some of the key considerations of the data analysis are as follows:

- 3.3 While there are long waiting lists in health the children on those lists are attending school irrespective of a clinical diagnosis and require specialist support.
- 3.4 The number of children pre school with identified additional learning needs is increasing year on year. This gives us a good prediction for future numbers and emphasises the need to make changes now in preparation.
- 3.5 The data collected indicated that all schools will need to meet a range of additional learning needs and that an inclusive approach to all learners will be critical. While we know there are increasing numbers of children and young people with Autism other areas of need are also growing and so we need to ensure our model can respond to all needs.
- 3.6 There are increasing pressures on central services and schools with increasing needs and a reducing budgets position.
- 3.7 As part of the research into emerging trends we also considered recent publications including Estyn and NEAL documents.
- 3.8 The Estyn thematic report:

https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2023-09/The%20new%20additional%20learning%20needs%20system_0.pdf

Made a key recommendation for local authorities to:

Continue to quality assure and review practice and additional learning provision to ensure funding and professional learning supports roll out effectively for:

- *Person centred practices*
- *Individual development plans*
- *Welsh-medium services, resources and provision*

It is considered that the Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places programme will help achieve this.

- 3.9 The National Academy for Education Leadership NAEL report:

<https://nael.cymru/en/library/what-is-the-role-of-educational-leadership-in-delivering-the-additional-learning-needs-reform-in-wales>

Made a series of observations around the challenges schools and school leaders face in relation to implementing and embedding ALNET. The Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places programme should help to support school leaders with some of those challenges although it is

recognised that the broader solution sits beyond the programme and requires national funding decisions.

- 3.10 It is considered that the Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places programme will support the local authority in meeting the needs of learners both now and in the future as demonstrated by the data collation and analysis.
- 3.11 It is also considered that the programme will help us to meet our obligations in relation to the Estyn recommendations however, as noted in the NEAL report, there are systematic requirements beyond the control of Swansea Council in terms of the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act (2018) and the redesign of demand led services will be crucial to make the most of available resources
- 3.12 Our data analysis and research tells us that need is increasing while resource is decreasing and this gives us an even greater case for change in order to work as creatively as possible.

4. Change Team progress

- 4.1 The Change Team met regularly during the Autumn Term to consider how best to take forward the Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places programme.
- 4.2 The team comprises the Director of Education, Head of Vulnerable Learners Service, Head of Achievement and Partnership Service, Head of Planning and Resources, ALN officers and project officers.
- 4.3 The Change Team agreed the new model and have identified the funding model for the review of the specialist teaching facilities.
- 4.4 Further consideration needs to be given to funding the cluster enhanced provision element of the model however, this element of the model is currently untested and the pilot programme in the Dylan Thomas cluster will be important. Analysis of the pilot programme will support further discussions on how (and if) to take this forward and make the case for funding.
- 4.5 A series of internal communication meetings will take place during the spring term as agreed by the Change Team. This will provide updates to headteachers, specifically those whose schools are proposed to have new or amended provision.
- 4.6 A report will be prepared for Swansea Council Cabinet to seek permission to consult on the new model of specialist teaching facilities.

5. Pilot Projects

- 5.1 To test the thinking which has emerged from the co-construction phase two pilot projects were undertaken.
- 5.2 The first pilot was a mini bus transport pilot project as detailed in previous service transformation committee meetings. This pilot project concluded shortly after the last committee meeting with a full evaluation undertaken.
- 5.3 The evaluation identified the project as a total success with both learners, families and schools welcoming the change from single taxi transport to school staffed mini bus transport.
- 5.4 A few of the key indicators of success were in relation to learner wellbeing and readiness to learn. Families also welcomed the link between home and school. Financial savings were also achieved.
- 5.5 The two schools involved in the pilot, Clwyd Primary School and Ysgol Pen y Bryn have now adopted the transport arrangements on a permanent basis.
- 5.6 Grant funding has been used to purchase two additional mini buses to support the project's sustainability.
- 5.7 A project team was established and a comprehensive suite of documentation has been produced to support roll out.
- 5.8 Agreement was sought and given to roll out the project more widely however, pressures in the Home to School Transport Team have prevented this from happening. While everything is in place to take this highly successful initiative forward we are now waiting for the Home to School Transport Team to secure the additional resources they need to undertake their element of the process.
- 5.9 Once the project is able to roll out fully there will likely be significant savings for the council but more importantly, improved learner experience.
- 5.10 The Dylan Thomas Cluster Enhanced Provision Project is progressing well with staff now appointed.
- 5.11 It is hoped that the provision will open in January 2023 with access for children within the cluster.
- 5.12 The pilot is being grant funded and analysis will be critical to assess whether or not all, or part, of the elements should be taken forward as a longer term arrangement. This in turn will guide funding considerations.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 The next key step and focus of the work is the submission of a report to Cabinet seeking permission to consult on the new model.
- 6.2 It will also be necessary to meet with all headteachers at schools who will play a key role in specialist teaching facility provision. This will take place during the spring term
- 6.3 It would be helpful to bring a draft cabinet report and accompanying communications to the next meeting of the Skills Transformation Committee where Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places is on the agenda.

7. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 7.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 7.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 7.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 7.1.3 This report is for information only. Any initiatives developed following this review will be subject to the IIA process as required.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background papers: None

Appendices: None