

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET****DATE: 26 OCTOBER 2021****REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: DENISE TURNER- STEWART, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING****LEAD OFFICER: RACHAEL WARDELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN FAMILIES AND LEARNING****SUBJECT: SEND TRANSFORMATION****ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES**

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Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with a progress update on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transformation programme. It follows on from the progress update to Cabinet on 23 February 2021 and highlights key areas of further transformation over the last eight months. The report seeks endorsement of the strategic priorities, implementation plan and next phase of delivery, which will drive additional improvements across Surrey for children and young people with SEND.

Building on a solid two years of transformation, the SEND transformation programme is moving into the next phase of delivery with a focus on building system-wide momentum and maximum impact on children's outcomes, demand for services, and financial trajectories over the next five years.

It is recognised that delivery will not be straightforward due to the complexities of the system. With the arrival of permanent Assistant Directors for Inclusion and Additional Needs in each of the four quadrants of the county, there will be a strengthened focus on accelerating delivery through culture change and practice. The deeper understanding and engagement with local communities will support the building of an inclusive ambition across the SEND system partnership.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. notes the work being undertaken through the SEND Transformation programme, and
2. endorses the strategic priorities, implementation plan and next phase of delivery, which will drive improvements across Surrey's SEND system.

Reason for Recommendations:

Surrey County Council is two years into a long-term programme of SEND transformation and is developing the next phase of planning and delivery to accelerate and embed change.

The report ensures that Cabinet is assured on the next phase of transformation, its delivery and the impact of the programme.

Executive Summary:

1. The SEND transformation programme is aligned with Surrey's Community Vision 2030, which seeks to realise the Council's ambition that everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them to succeed in life.
2. The SEND Transformation Programme is underpinned by our SEND Partnership Strategy 2019-2022 which sets out the ambition to improve long-term outcomes for children and young people through education closer to home and the right support at the right time so that children and young people who have additional needs can live, learn, and grow up locally and achieve their full potential. The wider strategy ambitions are set out as follows:
3. **Early joined up identification, response, and provision**
As children's needs are identified and met at the earliest possible stage, children should have access to the right provision to reach their potential and demand for long term statutory support reduces.
4. **Children thriving in their local communities**
Children should be able to attend their local mainstream or maintained school with the right help and support, to achieve their potential, and live, learn and grow up within their local community.
5. **Better experiences for children and families**
Providing children and families with the right information and advice and making it easier for children and families to receive a consistently good quality service.
6. **Financial sustainability and better use of resources**
Based on current assumptions, our focus on improving outcomes and value for money, joint commissioning and decision-making should ensure that the high needs grant funding available will be sufficient to meet children's needs within 5 years without the additional reliance of a general fund contribution. These assumptions will be reviewed and revised as necessary following the outcome of the SEND Review and the introduction of any new Ofsted SEND Inspection Framework.
7. The SEND Transformation is a holistic and far-reaching programme, and it incorporates activity across the Local Area SEND system alongside the activity necessary to discharge our SEND Written Statement of Action (later called the Accelerated Progress Plan). The programme is structured in a thematic way to aid delivery and encompasses four key areas of focus:
 - Inclusion in local maintained schools: Increasing the proportion of children able to thrive in a mainstream or specialist-maintained provision closer to home along with their peers and siblings.
 - Sufficiency, outcomes, and value of school places: Ensuring that the school estate provides sufficient, suitable places for children with Special Education Needs and Disability within the county, improving the value of independent places that are used through partnership and market management and reviewing the school funding model within maintained provision to ensure funds are allocated efficiently and effectively as possible.
 - Preparation for Adulthood: Supporting post 16 children in preparing for adulthood through more and better educational pathways and support for independence.

- Partnership Accountability: Ensuring all partners across the local area, including Council departments and local providers are working effectively together to support improvements in outcome, experience, and sustainability of the SEND system in Surrey.

Key Achievements:

8. Since February 2021 there has been significant progress across the transformation programme. We were able to ensure sustained progress against the backdrop of the pandemic, and notably the Department for Education formally recognised sufficient progress against our Accelerated Progress Plan in January 2021.
9. In their notification letter discharging the Accelerated Progress Plan, the Department for Education acknowledged that the sustained improvement made *‘comes as the result of a great deal of commitment and hard work on the part of the local authority, the Clinical Commissioning Group, families and front-line staff across education, health and social care’*. They also stated that they were *‘aware that local authorities are facing unprecedented pressures arising from the Covid-19 crisis and that these improvements have been made against an extremely challenging backdrop’*. The conditions remain challenging with children needing additional support to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on their mental health and learning environment.
10. Operational improvements are being sustained across the local authority with a visible impact on the quality of service delivery. The cumulative rolling timeliness of education health and care plans was 76% in August 2021 compared to a national average of 60%. The timeliness of annual reviews has risen to 84% in August 2021 from 61% in March 2021. The introduction of four new Assistant Directors in the Quadrant Teams will further strengthen our work to improve practice, the quality of communication and planning and will strengthen connections with schools, settings and other partners in the quadrants. These new senior leaders will work alongside their colleagues in social care to ensure that we strengthen holistic planning for children and families.
11. We have launched a new All Age Autism Strategy which was coproduced with service users including children, young people, parents, and carers. Young people with autism make up approximately a third of all children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). These young people using our services, along with professionals, helped to co-produce the All-Age Autism Strategy and a widescale consultation informed the final design. The strategy is being launched this September to drive better experiences and develop more inclusive communities across Surrey, creating opportunities and pathways for employment and support for children and adults.
12. A new Graduated Response Service and Learners’ Single Point of Access (LSPA) were introduced in July 2020. Over a year on this new LSPA has enabled families and professionals to connect more easily to help and support, with many issues now resolved at the first contact. This compliments a new ‘team around the school’ model being piloted in the North East of the County which will be rolled out across the County during 2021-22.
13. A schools-led Inclusion Roundtable took shape in April 2021 made up of 55 Head Teachers and Academy Trust CEOs. This has provided focus and sector leadership to our inclusive schools approach. The Chair of the Inclusion Roundtable provided this quote to include in the schools funding consultation 2022/23 *“the group’s remit to present an ambitious vision for high-quality, inclusive education for all will require school and system leaders to think and prioritise differently. We need to think beyond the traditional measures of success and come together as one so that we are united*

behind these aims.” The consultation proposes a transfer of funding from schools to support innovative school-led approaches. The Inclusion Roundtable supports our ambition in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for all children.

14. An Alliance of providers was awarded a new contract for a transformed and high-quality emotional wellbeing and mental health (EWMH) service. This contract went live on 1 April 2021 and supports our work to improve the experiences and outcomes for children with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs, these children make up 15% of all children with a statutory plan (EHCP). The new Mindworks Surrey website was launched on 20 September 2021 to provide children, young people, families and carers with information, advice and resources on mental health and emotional wellbeing services in Surrey. The website is a source of essential information, including how to ask for help in a crisis via the 24/7 Crisis Line. It also features a dedicated area for professionals including schools and GPs. The website is available here www.mindworks-surrey.org.
15. Within the Preparation for Adulthood project, there has been an emphasis on improving the opportunities and pathways to independence and employment for young people. There has been focused attention on joint planning with Adult Social Care, health and education; and we were able to achieve a 13% increase in placements relating to life skills and employment pathways. Work also began on changing the way educational placements are made, where possible, enabling young people to move back to Surrey to receive their educational support near to their families, friends, and local community.
16. Our capital investment programme delivered a large number of schemes to increase places in September 2021 by 290 including a new special school that opened on 1 September 2021 (Foxgrove Academy) as part of the Howard Partnership Trust. This is the second year of a four-year programme (year one of this programme delivered 74 new places). Further school places are being developed for September 2022 and September 2023.
17. In March 2021 our Alternative Provision Strategy was approved by Cabinet alongside a commitment to ensure that the estate is fit for purpose with a capital investment of £22.7m. The new strategy was widely consulted upon and informed by children and young people who were existing or previous users of the service. The emphasis of the new strategy is to provide alternative pathways back into mainstream education; it also incorporates an enhanced outreach offer to schools.
18. In January 2021 we commissioned IMPOWER to provide a trajectory management tool. This is a means of supporting strategic financial planning to address the deficit position resulting from the continued shortfall in Designated Schools Grant High Needs Block (DSG HNB). IMPOWER were also commissioned during this time to undertake a rapid stocktake of the SEND transformation programme based on their work to date with other local authorities and to ensure we were taking every opportunity to honestly reflect on the programme’s ambition and accelerate progress where possible. This was undertaken between February – March 2021.
19. IMPOWER reported that the conditions for success are in place and solid foundations have been built within SCC and across the system. They made additional recommendations to accelerate the programme in relation to early intervention, casework practice and enhancing the impact of system leadership and collective ambition through a renewed communications strategy and approach. The delivery of the trajectory management tool provides a strong basis to ensure that the programme can measure impact and delivery of our plans to achieve a sustainable service within 5 years.

20. Work began in April to respond to IMPOWER's findings, the majority of actions having now been completed or due to be completed within the next 6 months.
21. Partnership Accountability: positive work is underway with partners through the Local Area SEND Partnership Board. Partners have recently highlighted and shared their experiences of an emerging culture shift evidenced by a renewed level of trust and far more collaborative relationship with the Council and partners. The work being taken forward through the 'Team around the School' approach and the Surrey Leaders Inclusion Roundtable is also supporting this system wide cultural change. In addition, approximately 80 head teachers have participated in the Whole School SEND Leadership Programme in its first year.
22. Engagement with the parent carer forum Family Voice continues to be further developed through regular monthly meetings attended jointly by Council and Health colleagues. The focus of these meetings is to ensure timely and accurate information sharing with parents and carers in Surrey. Further work is planned to increase our work with children and young people to ensure that their voices are driving our improvement work. This includes embedding the action card system through the user voice and participation team.
23. At an overarching programme level, we have recently expanded our leadership and programme capacity to deliver our improvement and transformation activity. At the beginning of the 2021/22 Academic year, we will reaffirm the quadrant-based model with the introduction of four Assistant Directors of Inclusion and Additional Needs. The Quadrant AD roles will provide important leadership capacity to bring together our three key transformation priorities (SEND, Safeguarding and Emotional Health and Wellbeing). They will play an important role in our school community and support our learners to achieve better outcomes through support and challenge in our settings.

Key Deliverables for 2021/22:

24. Within the inclusion workstream there is a significant level of transformation and improvement activity underway including the development of an Inclusion Statement with partners through the Inclusion Roundtable, developing an inclusion toolkit and skills strategy for school staff. Prototyping and piloting of the 'Team around the School' model is also underway as well as developing and transforming the Speech, Language and Communication skills and the Social, Emotional and Mental Health offer. This is alongside the implementation and embedding of the All-Age Autism Strategy and new CAMHS offer.
25. Through the sufficiency, outcomes and value workstream the programme team are progressing completion of the 27 approved projects that will create up to 1,600 new specialist school places in Surrey for a combined capital investment of £79.6m over the period 2020-2024. 21 of the 27 live and approved projects in Phases 1, 2 and 3 are currently running to agreed programme delivery timescales and more than 290 new specialist school places were available from September 2021. The first full year effect of this investment is approximately £8.25m reduced revenue expenditure. Similar numbers are projected for September 2022 from existing approved programmes.
26. In addition, the latest version of the National Schools and College Contract has now been implemented with all independent providers. These are model standard contracts recommended by the Association of Directors of Children's Services. These contracts

enable robust contract management of these providers and monitoring of their service delivery.

27. Following a review of Home to School Transport over the past year the Transport Assistance Team, who are responsible for approving eligibility, moved from Admissions into the Transport Coordination Team in May 2021. This change means the teams will be able to work more closely and therefore speed up the processing of applications, arranging transport and in turn hopefully reducing complaints. The service is also launching our Independent Travel Training service in September (subject to Covid restrictions) as we move the service from a Home to School Transport service to a Transport Assistance service.
28. As part of the Preparation for Adulthood programme the focus has been on identifying and supporting a group of young people whose outcomes could be improved by moving back into Surrey for September 2021. This work will now be extended to a wider group of young people by consent. Placement changes will only take place following careful consultation and agreement with families and/or the young person themselves. A joint review with Health of continuing care cases is also being taken forward to ensure no young person experiences a break in provision as they move from children's to adult health services.
29. The programme team has also expanded the apprenticeship offer to include seven placements within Surrey County Council and has established a Communication and Engagement Working Group with representation from Family Voice, our parent partnership. Scope and direction for prototyping new ways of working for Children with Disabilities and Transition Team have also been agreed for implementation.
30. In addition, as part of our partnership commitment with Health a joint commissioning strategy is being developed between education, health, and care to underpin the longer-term activity to improve outcomes for children, this will be ready for implementation early in 2022. This will be underpinned by a refreshed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Financial Position and Deficit Recovery:

31. The financial pressures on the DSG and High Needs Block (HNB) continue to be a key focus of the Transformation programme. At the end of 2020/21, following a year end overspend of £34.5m, the cumulative deficit on the HNB now stands at £83m with an overall DSG deficit balance of £63.7m when offsetting other block surpluses.
32. The current budget contains an assumed overspend of £23.8m which is matched by a General Fund contribution to the offsetting reserve. Previous assumptions within the MTFS were that this annual deficit will begin to reduce by £5.3m per annum to achieve a balanced in-year budget within 5 years. The IMPOWER trajectory model has supported in updating this trajectory to reflect the current position of the programme. The current forecast for 21/22 outturn is an overspend of £5m on the budgeted position, so an overall overspend of £28.8m.
33. The revised trajectory, supported by the IMPOWER model, is that the position over five years is still on track to deliver a balanced position. However, this is not delivered evenly over that period and would see a £9m pressure in 22/23 reducing to £7m in 23/24 before coming back more in line with previous expectations. This revised trajectory is being factored into the Council's current MTFS planning. The IMPOWER model will support the Council's 'twin track' approach to financial planning and will

enable us to review the planning assumption with greater certainty as delivery progresses.

34. There is also a risk that SEND demand continues to increase post Covid leading to further spend, this, along with other financial impacts, is monitored at fortnightly meetings along with plans to mitigate the growth wherever possible through earlier intervention. The Department for Education SEND Review has been postponed and it is not yet known how this may impact the ability for the local authority to develop a financially sustainable system.

Summary:

35. The service has now completed two years of a transformation journey and the SEND transformation programme is moving into the next phase of delivery with a focus on building system-wide momentum and maximum impact on children's outcomes, demand for services, and financial trajectories over the next five years.
36. It is recognised that delivery will not be straightforward due to the complexities of the system, but with the arrival of permanent Assistant Directors there will be a strengthened focus on accelerating delivery through culture change and practice; further building an inclusive ambition across the SEND system partnership.
37. We are also aware that working in partnership is essential, we are therefore evolving how we work with partners at operational and strategic levels, working collaboratively and putting proportionate governance and reporting mechanisms in place to help us to collectively achieve our goals.

Consultation:

38. The SEND Transformation Programme is informed by family experiences of the SEND system and the drive to improve outcomes for children and young people. The Council has worked closely with Family Voice Surrey who represent parents with children and young people with additional needs and delivered a series of consultations and engagement activities to inform the development of its strategies and its commissioning. The Council has also engaged directly with young people to shape provision for them.
39. The SEND Transformation Programme is also subject to regular scrutiny by the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee. The Select Committee received a further update on SEND Transformation progress in October 2021.

Risk Management and Implications:

<p>Risk to strategic shift to early help and sustainability</p>	<p>The SEND System Partnership is a mechanism for engaging key partnership in the strategic delivery of the programme.</p> <p>We are prioritising development of whole system insight to track progress, enable effective decision making and better targeting of service delivery</p>
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Risk to delivering sufficiency of placements and provision that matches need	<p>We have invested in our sustainability planning including improvement of analysis and forecasting capability, targeted commissioning and specifications that match need.</p> <p>The delivery of our Capital Programme is proactive and geared for speedy delivery recognising the financial and operational impact of delays.</p>
Risk to delivering culture change, narrative, consistency and system capability and quality	<p>The development of a powerful system communications strategy to ensure system-wide awareness</p> <p>We will develop, embed and continually reinforce system narrative to support realistic and evidence-based conversations with children and families.</p> <p>We will continue to strengthen the L-SPA capability as a key factor in realising system and cultural change</p>
Risks from national policy and funding context	<p>Continue to make a robust case to the government for funding and policy changes, and building evidence to support the case, including unintended consequences of the Children and Families Act 2014.</p>
Risk to partnership and provider capacity	<p>The programme is co-produced to support partner buy-in and ownership through strengthened relationships, including through the SEND System Partnership Board and other stakeholder groups.</p> <p>The Transformation Programme Board takes a lead role in planning, coordinating, scheduling and prioritising engagement and activity.</p>

Financial and Value for Money Implications:

40. The overall position for SEND is set out above in paragraphs 25-28.
41. In addition to this, the SEND transformation programme also requires transformation funding each year to support this work. The forecast expenditure to be funded through transformation funding in 21/22 is c£4m. Further bids for 22/23 are currently being considered against the demands in the wider transformation programme.

Section 151 Officer Commentary:

42. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2021/22 remains uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which may not be fully funded. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the ongoing strategy for SEND transformation. Reducing the annual General Fund reserve contribution will have a significant impact on the

Medium-Term Financial Strategy so progress towards this is key for the future financial position of the Council.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

43. This is a report to update Cabinet in relation to programmes and strategies which have been the subject of previous decisions. There are no decisions with legal implications for Cabinet to take at this point in time.

Equalities and Diversity:

44. The SEND Partnership Strategy, to which the SEND Transformation programme aligns, was subject to a full Equalities Impact Assessment and was considered by Cabinet on 29 January 2019. This EIA has been reviewed and remains relevant to the projects and programmes schemes outlined in this cabinet paper: <https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=120&MId=6322&Ver=442>.
45. The strategy focuses on inclusion and ensuring that children and young people who have SEND can get a good education at a school close to their home. The aim of the strategy is to make sure that every child and young person who has SEND growing up in Surrey has the best possible start in life and equality of opportunity is maximised across the different need types and range of needs across the four quadrants of the county.
46. Specific Capital developments, the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Contract and All Age Autism Strategy have been subject to individual Equality Impact Assessments.

Other Implications:

47. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	The SEND Transformation Programme directly supports both the Surrey Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 and SEND Partnership Strategy 2019. Improving the inclusion of children and young people who have SEND and/or who are looked after in Surrey mainstream and maintained special schools will enable better long-term outcomes, with children closer to home and more connected to local communities and support services.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	The council has a duty to promote and improve safeguarding in education as well as educational outcomes for all children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. The creation of additional specialist capacity closer to home supports highly effective joint agency monitoring to safeguard children, to reduce placement breakdown and increased demand on care services.
Environmental sustainability	The provision of education places closer to home will reduce the average journey times for learners with EHCPs and is aligned with the vision and aspirations of Surrey's SEND Transport Transformation programme.

Compliance against net-zero emissions target and future climate compatibility/resilience	The provision of education places closer to home will reduce the average journey times for learners with EHCPs and is aligned with the vision and aspirations of Surrey's SEND Transport Transformation programme.
Public Health	The Surrey Healthy Schools approach in partnership with Public Health supports the delivery of the SEND Transformation in schools and educational settings.

What Happens Next:

48. The SEND Transformation Programme continues to report monthly to the SEND Transformation Board on progress in meeting key timescales, performance and impact. A programme of this size and complexity continues to require significant programme office capacity to ensure that delivery targets are met. Additional programme and strategic capacity secured from April 2021 will ensure programmes and projects remain on track. The Local Area SEND Partnership Board continues to galvanise stakeholder accountability so that system partners take ownership for the changes required.

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Consulted:

Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Executive Director for Children Families Lifelong Learning and Culture

Annexes:

None

Sources/background papers:

Send Transformation Report to Cabinet:

[Cabinet Report SEND Transformation- Final.pdf \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

Surrey Community Vision 2030:

[Community vision for Surrey in 2030 - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

SEND Partnership Strategy:

[SEND\SEND System Partnership Strategy\Surrey SEND Partnership strategy 2019-22.pdf](#)

Letter from Department for Education regarding the Discharge of the Accelerated Progress Plan

[DfE Letter - Surrey - APP Discharge Notification Letter January 2021.pdf](#)