



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

21 September 2023

SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy and Inspection Outcome

Cabinet Members:	Eileen Callear - Cabinet Member: Education, Employment & Visitor Economy Shirley Reynolds - Cabinet Member: Early Years, Children and Young People
Lead Director:	Simon Wellman – Director: Education and Skills
Service Area:	Education and Skills
Report Author:	Natalie Bevan - Service Delivery Manager: SEND and Personalisation
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 367364 Email: natalie.bevan@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	1 August 2023
Report considered by:	SMT - 15 August 2023 Policy Development - 7 September 2023 Cabinet - 21 September 2023

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approves the recently revised Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy (**Appendix A**), recognising this as a local area partnership document between children/young people, parents, the Council, NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS and other key partners.

- 1.2 Notes the outcome of the recent local area inspection of SEND undertaken by OFSTED/CQC which:
 - a. resulted in the Council achieving the highest possible result;
 - b. judged our SEN arrangements to typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people whom have SEN and/or disabilities; and
 - c. recognises that appropriate action is being taken where improvements are needed.
- 1.3 Notes the letter from the Minister of State for Children, Families and Wellbeing, Claire Coutinho MP (**Appendix C**) congratulating the Council for the outcome of our inspection that recognised many positive aspects of our local area practice, alongside areas in need of improvement.
- 1.4 Notes that Telford & Wrekin Council has recently been selected by the Department for Education (DfE) to lead the new SEND pilot for the West Midlands, as part of its £70 million investment into a change programme in respect of the national SEND and AP system.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the positive outcome of the recent local area SEND inspection and resulting actions and to seek Cabinet approval for the attached SEND and AP Strategy which reaffirms the Council's commitment to achieving best outcomes for children and young people in the Borough and to ensure continuous improvement.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Telford and Wrekin's local area strategy for Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) & Alternative Provision (AP) required an update (previous issue dated 2016) in line with proposals laid out in the Department for Education's national SEND and AP Improvement Plan March 2023 and OFSTED/CQC new inspection framework of local area SEND arrangements (January 2023).
- 3.2 The strategy sets out Telford & Wrekin's local area vision for children and young people aged 0-25 years with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for children and young people who are accessing or may need to access alternative provision. It is a partnership document across the council, NHS and third sector services recognising that children and young people with needs will require and receive support from across education, health and care services.
- 3.3 The strategy, that weaves together SEND and AP for the first time, recognises that many children that attend alternative provision will often have SEND. Alternative provision refers to a range of providers that offer educational provision outside of mainstream education. It includes Pupil Referral Units, in Telford and Wrekin known as the Linden Centre for children in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and Kickstart for

children in Key Stage 4, alongside other organisations. Children and young people can attend alternative provision for short, medium and long term placements.

- 3.4 The SEND Code of Practice 2015 states that children, young people and their families should be involved in decisions that are about them at all levels and that coproduction should be at the heart of developing services. Coproduction therefore features at the heart of the new strategy and sets out our clear intention to work with our parents, children and young people.
- 3.5 The strategy was developed through workshops with professionals across education, health and care, parents and carers and young people during November and December 2022. A draft strategy was published for further consultation during February and March 2023 and the final document (**Appendix A**) includes amendments made in response to feedback received.
- 3.6 All local area arrangements for SEND in England are subject to inspection by OFSTED and CQC. It is a joint inspection between the two organisations given the Council and NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board are collectively responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND.
- 3.7 Telford and Wrekin were previously inspected in May 2017 and received a positive outcome. A new inspection framework was published by OFSTED and CQC in January 2023. Telford and Wrekin was one of the first of eight local areas, and the first in the West Midlands, to be inspected under the new framework which took place between 20 to 24th March 2023. The outcome judgment was that our arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children with SEND and where improvements are needed we are taking action. This is the highest possible result and means Telford and Wrekin will not be subject to a local area SEND inspection for a further 5 years. (Please refer to **Appendix B** for the inspection outcome letter).
- 3.8 To highlight some of the positive aspects of practice found during the inspection the OFSTED/CQC outcome letter specifies:
 - Children and young people with SEND are visible, valued and included in the Telford community.
 - Partners work together well and have the passion, determination and commitment to develop the care and provision for children and young when SEND even further.
 - Children and young people with SEND benefit from effective joined-up working between education, health and social care providers.

- Children and young people appreciate the wide range of accessible services and activities available to them.
- Children and young people's needs are typically identified and assessed quickly and accurately. Hence the right help is put in place to meet their evolving needs.
- Typically, parent groups believe that area leaders listen and respond to their views.
- Area leaders have supported the development of the Shout Out for SEND (SOS) group, which is made up of a 'small but mighty' group of children and young people with SEND.

3.9 Two areas of improvement were identified as part of the inspection as follows:

- Leaders from NHS ST&W ICB need to work closely with other partnership leaders to improve the governance, monitoring and oversight of diagnostic pathways (including neurodevelopmental, mental health and speech and language therapy assessments) for children and young people with SEND, so that their needs are assessed and met consistently well and in a timely manner.
- Partnership leaders should improve communication with families, beyond the formal consultation routes, to share effective information and advice about the provision available to children and young people with SEND.

Our strategic action plan for SEND has been updated subsequently to reflect our actions around these points and is available via the local offer (www.telfordsend.org.uk)

3.10 Our inspection achievement was recognised by Claire Coutinho MP, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing who sent a congratulatory letter (**Appendix C**).

3.11 In March 2023 the Department for Education published a national SEND improvement plan, in light of the significant challenges faced across England in administering a consistent, financially stable system that is accessible and well understood by parents. A number of reforms are suggested with a lead Local Authority (LA) from each region in England selected to work with three neighbouring authorities to pilot the reforms over the next two academic years.

3.12 In April 2023, Telford and Wrekin Council was asked to express an interest in becoming the lead LA for the West Midlands and following a competitive process was selected in May 2023. The 'SEND change programme', which will be funded, will commence from September 2023.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 The new SEND and AP strategy sets out the ambition for the area partnership over the next five years to continue developing services and make continuous improvements. It articulates the vision for our children with SEND to be valued, visible and included within their local community, providing them with educational opportunities to achieve their aspirations, leading to a happy, healthy and fulfilling life.
- 4.2 Linking with the Telford & Wrekin Health & Wellbeing Strategy it has a strong focus on the best start in life. We understand the need to intervene early and recognise that children and young people with SEND are especially important as they may be more vulnerable to health inequalities. The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy is referenced within the Health & Wellbeing Strategy 'starting well' priority.
- 4.3 The strategy identifies 7 priority areas of focus which include:
- Localised high quality provision.
 - Early identification and help.
 - Participation in decisions.
 - A system that makes sense.
 - Use of data to inform decisions.
 - A supportive Alternative Provision offer.
 - Feeling valued and visible in their community.

Further detail about the priorities can be found in pages 9-22 in the strategy document (**Appendix A**).

- 4.4 Integral to the strategy is a focus on outcomes with the key question being *how do we know that what we do makes a difference?* The framework identifies 7 outcomes as follows:
- I am healthy
 - I am safe
 - I am happy
 - I am heard
 - I am friendly
 - I am independent
 - I am achieving

A description is provided about what each outcome means to children and young people, their families and professionals and a performance dashboard will be

created to measure ongoing impact. Further detail about the outcomes can be found in pages 23-30 in the strategy document (**Appendix A**).

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 An alternative option would be to retain the existing SEND strategy (dated 2016) but this does not reflect the new DfE SEND and AP improvement plan published in March 2016 or OFSTED/CQC local area SEND framework (published January 2023) and therefore would not enable us to demonstrate how we best meet the needs of children and young people in accordance with current national and regulatory policy development.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 Without a strategy the local area will not be clear about how we intend to develop our services and provision and further improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This could result in

- increased revenue costs
- limited progress on SEND/AP improvement action plan.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The proposals set out in this report support the following council priorities:

- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community,
- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live,
- A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 Telford and Wrekin Council received over £32 million of funding in 2023/24, as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant, to support children and young people with SEND. This includes funding for schools, specialist placements and support services.

8.2 The Government are investing £70m into their SEND Change Programme over the next two academic years. The West Midlands Change Programme Partnership of which Telford and Wrekin Council are the Lead Local Authority will receive in the region of £5.8m.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 states that children, young people and their families should be involved in all decisions that are about them at all levels and that coproduction should be at the heart of developing services across education, health and care. The draft strategy has drawn upon the views and experiences of

young people and their families and thus the Council is able to demonstrate that it is meeting its statutory obligations. Ongoing legal advice on the implementation and adoption of the policy will be provided as and when required.

- 9.2 When reviewing any policy or strategy, the Council has to have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty. The measures set out in the SEND and AP Strategy support those with protected characteristics and should promote equality for those with protected characteristics.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 A borough wide strategy will have a positive impact for families across all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 The strategy aims to close the gap in outcomes for children and young people with SEND, especially in relation to education, health and care and becoming economically independent.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 This strategy relates to all SEND children with a diverse range of backgrounds and needs. This includes improving outcomes for children with disabilities.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 None

14.0 Background Papers

Appendix A SEND and AP Strategy 2023-2028 Working Together for better SEND and AP outcomes in Telford & Wrekin

Appendix B OFSTED and CQC Area SEND inspection of Telford and Wrekin Local Area Partnership.

Appendix C Ministerial letter from Claire Coutinho, MP to Telford and Wrekin regarding outcome of the local area SEND inspection.

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	10/08/23	10/08/23	TS
Legal	10/08/23	10/08/23	RP/AL
Director	11/08/23	11/08/23	SW