

“5 STEPS TO COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY”
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE’S STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING ARRANGEMENTS FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND
BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES (SEBD)

Introduction

The County Council is required to keep under review its arrangements for special educational provision including its arrangements for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). The County Council has focussed its recent review on the needs of young people with SEBD.

The review was conducted between April and September, 2012 and has culminated in the development of this strategy which describes new arrangements for this vulnerable group of learners. The strategy has been developed following a comprehensive consultation with stakeholders including schools, parents, children and young people, elected members and other partners.

It describes how the County Council will work effectively in partnership and collaboration with schools and other agencies in order to improve SEBD provision in Nottinghamshire. It sets out the key steps required to deliver the necessary change and ensure that Nottinghamshire is a place where children and young people are safe, healthy and happy and enjoy a good quality of life and everyone can achieve their potential.

Background

The importance of arrangements for pupils with SEBD has been recognised both nationally, through Charlie Taylor, the Government’s expert adviser on behaviour and locally, through the review which provided an excellent opportunity to fully debate these issues in Nottinghamshire.

The review has covered learners on a spectrum of behaviours. This includes those learners who might be considered to be mildly disruptive in mainstream schools to those at the other end of the spectrum with severe and complex social and emotional difficulties that require highly specialist interventions.

There are a number of pressures currently facing schools and the County Council in relation to the cost and effectiveness of existing arrangements in Nottinghamshire for children and young people with SEBD. In Nottinghamshire we spend approximately £10 million per year on making provision for learners with more complex SEBD. The review has considered whether it is possible to spend that money differently in order to achieve better outcomes for these learners.

The key pressures facing schools and the County Council include:

- increasing costs of Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and specialist placements and the corresponding impact on the budgets of all schools
- a lack of locally available specialist SEBD provision
- the changing relationship between the County Council and schools in the context of the changing status of schools (academies and free schools) and the changing role of the County Council
- the recent reconfiguration of the behaviour and attendance service and the new requirement for the PRU to focus on short stay provision
- changes to statutory duties in relation to alternative provision
- the reform of funding arrangements for schools including PRUs
- a need to provide a positive climate for learning for all children and young people
- a perceived increase in the challenging behaviour of very young children
- the requirement for schools to maintain standards of achievement and standards of behaviour in accordance with the new Ofsted framework.

What does SEBD mean?

Challenging behaviour in children is best understood not as a need in itself, but as a consequence of unmet needs. These may be unmet social and emotional needs, unmet communication needs, unmet physical and sensory needs, or unmet learning needs. The psychology service suggests the following principles should underpin our understanding about behaviour:

- children do well if they can; children behave well if they can
- behaviour can change. Positive, pro-social behaviour can be learned
- behaviour does not occur in a vacuum, and its meaning can only be understood within the context in which it occurs
- behaviour is something that people **do**, and is not what people **are**
- the behaviour of children is often closely linked to the expectations of adults.

Children with SEBD may need help to resolve the social and emotional issues that are causing challenging behaviour before they can begin to make academic progress.

In Nottinghamshire in the 2011-12 academic year there were 122 permanent exclusions from primary and secondary schools in Nottinghamshire which represents 0.11% of the number of pupils in schools (11 pupils in every 10,000). Permanent exclusions from secondary schools were vastly more common (91.8%) than in primary schools (8.2%). It is higher in some districts than others: in Spring 2011-12, it was highest in Bassetlaw (32) and lowest in Newark (6). Compared with the previous year the number of permanent exclusions has increased by 0.01% i.e. 12 more permanent exclusions. The main reason for exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour. There were no exclusions from special schools. The pupils who are excluded are much more likely to:

- be boys, especially White British
- have special educational needs
- be entitled to free school meals
- with a focus on individual learner progress.

What did we learn from the review?

During the review three consultation events were held at which a number of common themes were identified across all districts in Nottinghamshire which will help to shape future provision. The themes were also evident in arrangements which were examined and observed in other local authorities where the provision was considered to be highly effective. These themes included the need for:

- early intervention and effective co-ordination of key early intervention services
- high level of parental involvement at earlier stages
- nurturing environments across all phases
- flexibility in the curriculum
- home/school liaison workers
- therapeutic interventions for children and families
- an effective training and professional development programme
- effective and collaborative SEBD partnerships
- an agreed charging mechanism for the cost of Alternative Provision for schools which opt out of partnership working
- increased devolution of resources and responsibilities to schools and partnerships
- strong links between schools and the PRU
- availability of short term placements at the PRU without the need for permanent exclusions
- effective transition between phases
- cost effective, high quality SEBD provision.

The outcomes of the review process have culminated in the collation of a bank of evidence that supports the need to change the model of provision currently available in Nottinghamshire. There was a strong consensus that retaining the status quo is not an option. The outcomes have been grouped under five headings and resulted in a strategy entitled “Five steps to collective responsibility”.

Five Steps to Collective Responsibility

There are a number of key partners with responsibility for this vulnerable group of learners who will need to subscribe to a notion of collective responsibility in which all have a part to play in bringing about improvements in provision across Nottinghamshire. We believe that the measures required to bring about the necessary change can be described as five steps to collective responsibility which are:

Step 1: Developing the capacity of all schools to manage pupils with SEBD

All schools should be aware of what is expected from them. There should be shared knowledge about good practice. Primary schools should develop nurturing environments. Good transition plans should be in place. All schools should identify a lead professional for SEBD and they should be part of a County-wide supportive network.

Step 2: Strengthening the local partnership offer

Increasingly resources will be devolved to partnerships of schools that have suitable alternative provision in place. Partnerships of schools will have increased decision making responsibility for determining access to appropriate provision in their district. Partnerships will develop a range of appropriate alternative provisions to be made available in their schools and local colleges.

Step 3: Defining the role of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

Underpinning the development of partnerships will be the desire to develop a new approach for the provision of services for pupils who have been excluded or who are at risk of exclusion. This will include the development of specific approaches according to key stages. Central to this approach is the PRU which is currently known as The Learning Centre. The new approach is described below:

- **Early Years/Key Stages 1/2** – alternatives to PRU provision will be identified and provided in mainstream school settings
- **Key Stage 3** – specialist turnaround provision will be established within the PRU through strong collaboration with schools and partnerships of schools
- **Key Stages 4/5** – devolve resources to partnerships in order that they may commission or provide appropriate alternative provision.

The Learning Centre will be divided into three separate PRUs serving different 'bands' of the County, i.e.:

- **North:** Bassetlaw and Newark partnerships
- **Central:** Mansfield, North Ashfield and SHENK (South Ashfield & North Broxtowe)
- **South:** Rushcliffe, Gedling and South Broxtowe.

New PRU management committees will be formed, in line with DfE guidance, to include strong mainstream school partnership representation. The partnerships will have increased responsibility for agreeing who attends the PRU from their partnership area.

Step 4: Improving the quality of specialist provision

Nottinghamshire does not maintain any local specialist SEBD provision. Instead it purchases provision from other local authorities, alternative providers or independent non-maintained specialist schools. At the time of the review there were:

- 20 pupils attending other LA special schools
- 22 pupils attending independent non-maintained special schools
- 64 pupils receiving education from alternative providers.

This education is provided at a total cost of c. £3 million for 106 learners.

During the consultation process, a number of schools were surprised at the significant costs associated with this model of service delivery and asked whether this could be

delivered in a more cost effective manner through provision maintained by the County Council.

The County Council will develop a continuum of provision which will include specialist SEBD provision. A feasibility study will be undertaken to determine whether Nottinghamshire should:

- develop a mixed economy of specialist SEBD provision which includes locally managed small scale SEBD provision or
- establish a local SEBD special school or
- continue to purchase placements from other local authority special schools or independent non-maintained schools or
- promote the establishment of a specialist free school or independent SEBD school or
- enhance the offer made by Nottinghamshire's existing special schools.

The County Council will also establish a preferred provider framework for specialist SEBD provision in the independent non-maintained sector.

Step 5: Defining the role of the County Council

At a broader level, we want to work with schools to promote a more positive agenda around improving pupil engagement – a shared enterprise in which all school staff and services share responsibility for achieving the best possible outcomes for some of the most vulnerable young people in our community.

The County Council will be responsible for:

- developing a framework of approved providers of Alternative Provision
- commissioning a feasibility study of the benefits of establishing a local specialist SEBD school
- establishing a PSED team (Primary Social Emotional Development team)
- extending the development of a supportive network for named behaviour lead professionals in schools
- providing support and challenge to the development of partnerships of schools
- allocating a named Local Based Area Officer to each district partnership to facilitate the development of the partnership and support the implementation of the Fair Access Protocol
- allocating a PRU Partnership Co-ordinator to facilitate admissions to the PRU and support for alternative provision arrangements within the district partnerships
- offering the advice of a fair access officer. The officer will support the management of placements of pupils who are vulnerable and who have additional levels of complexity and need
- developing a mechanism for devolving resources to partnerships of schools
- developing a system of incentives (include and reward) and disincentives (exclude and pay the costs) in order to minimise exclusions
- providing regular feedback to the Schools Forum on expenditure for these arrangements

- developing a phased implementation plan in order to bring about the required change.

Conclusion

The recommendations contained within this strategy have arisen from extensive research into national practice, visits to other local authorities, collation of national and local data and consultation with stakeholders including schools, the PRU, parents and children and young people with SEBD.

It is recognised that this is a complex area of provision which provides a high degree of challenge for schools and local authorities both nationally as well as locally. As such, a number of different solutions will be required at different key stages of the national curriculum.

The new strategy, '5 steps to collective responsibility' will be implemented in a phased approach which will require the commitment of all partners including the County Council. In order to implement the strategy the County Council will establish a number of working groups with a focus on:

- procuring alternative provision
- developing effective partnerships
- providing support to schools
- developing the PRU provision
- undertaking a feasibility study of specialist SEBD provision
- considering human resource implications
- considering financial implications and devolution of resources.

These working groups will produce an implementation plan between November 2012 and January 2013 in readiness for a phased implementation from April 2013 and beyond.

This strategy will have been successful when we can say:

- Permanent exclusions are highly exceptional
- There are no permanent exclusions in Key Stage 1 and 2
- Young people can receive appropriate alternative provision in their own communities
- Schools have developed effective partnerships to which the County Council can confidently devolve funding, resources and responsibility
- Teachers feel more confident in managing challenging behaviour
- Teachers are able to access support and advice from their colleagues and from specialist teams provided by the County Council
- Parents and young people feel more engaged with learning.

The full report detailing the outcomes of the SEBD review is available on Nottinghamshire County Council's website.