

Purpose of the Report

This report seeks to:

1. inform Schools Forum of the results of the High Needs consultation on new ways of working at a locality level to meet the needs of Children and Young People (CYP) with complex SEND, in line with the recommendations from the High Needs Review 2018
2. request that the Schools Forum members support the development of the infrastructure to deliver new ways of working at a locality level

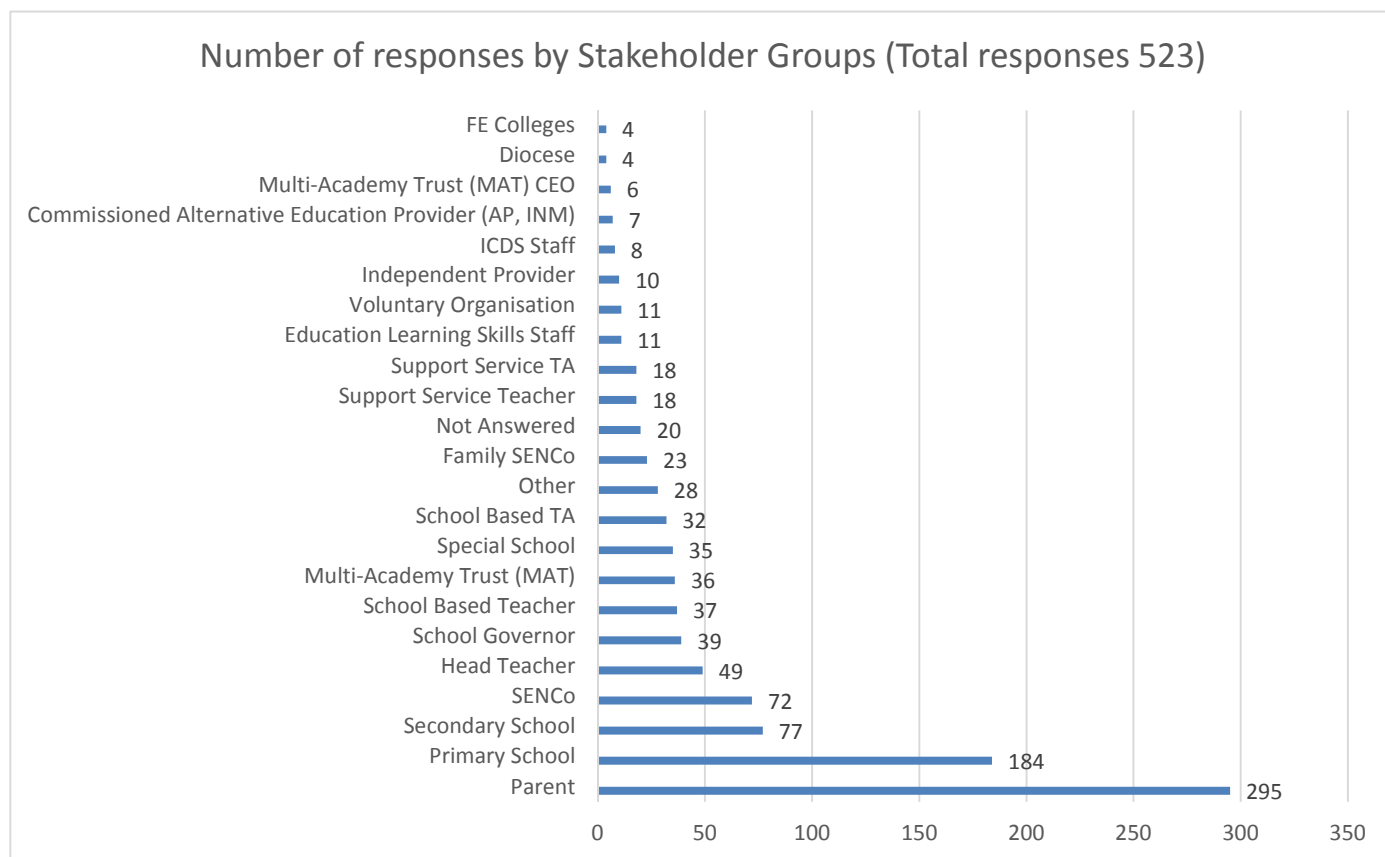
Background

1. In response to the recommendations of the 2018 High Needs Review, commissioned by NCC and the Nottinghamshire Schools Forum, a number of proposals were made and consulted on to inform a reshaping of High Needs Provision and Services in Nottinghamshire.

Information and Advice

2. Following a series of pre-consultation events with a wide range of stakeholders throughout December 2018 and January 2019, the proposals went out to public consultation for 4 weeks from Friday 18th January to Friday 15th February 2019.
5. The Council sought the views of key stakeholders with an interest in high level needs funding pertaining specifically to:
 - Proposal 1 – District locality working
 - Proposal 2 – Parental confidence
 - Proposal 3 – Mainstream enhanced provision
 - Proposal 4 – Special school transitional hub pilot
 - Proposal 5 – Preparing for adulthood
 - Proposal 6 – Developing the role of locality/District SENCOs
 - Proposal 7– New ways of working for Schools and Families Specialist Services (SFSS)
 - Proposal 8 – Continuation of the statutory sensory team as a county resource
 - Proposal 9 – Retention of an early years TA team within localities
 - Proposal 10 – Deployment of SFSS staffing and new ways of working in locality teams
 - Proposal 11 – Development of a SFSS sold offer
6. In total 523 responses were received through the online Nottinghamshire County Council consultation hub.

7. Responses were received from a wide range of stakeholders, including individual parents and representative groups, a range of schools with differing governance arrangements, SEND professionals, and partner agencies across health and social care and charitable and private providers.



Results of the High Needs Review consultation

8. The results of the consultation (See Appendix A) conclude that the large majority of stakeholders are in favour of adopting all the proposed changes to build the structures and processes that require key professional stakeholders to work together at a more local level, to make informed, principled, proportionate decisions about the use of High Needs funding.
9. In addition the consultation offered the opportunity for respondents to submit free text comments. Over 1500 comments and questions were received. All comments and questions received were reviewed as part of the survey and consultation analysis and taken into consideration as part of the decision making process.
10. A detailed analysis indicated that the free text comments can be grouped into a number of themes, many supporting the consultation proposals, and some which suggest other points for consideration. These are as follows:
 - **Collective responsibility and effective locality working** is, on the whole, very much supported, with the expectation that it will lead to better use of available resources and the prospect of delivering better outcomes.

- There was a view that **decision making** around how this would be developed and implemented in practice, needs to be **based on informed and meaningful dialogue**.
- Many welcomed the fact that schools will be in a better position to provide enhanced provision locally and as such it was felt that **schools will be more accountable for meeting the needs of students with SEND in their locality**.
- Another positive view was that less children will be refused school places on the grounds that a school cannot meet their needs.
- While there was strong support for all proposals, a view that was voiced repeatedly was the necessity for **fair and equitable provision, based on a child's need and not their postcode**.
- Another theme emerging was the need for **robust moderation**, to ensure that funds are allocated and used fairly to support pupils with SEND. There was some concern about the risk of larger schools, or those 'who shout loudest' receiving a disproportionate amount of funding, to the detriment of pupils in smaller schools and the needs of some students not being met.
- The need for the **Local Authority to provide a lead to manage, monitor, support and challenge budgetary allocations and the use of funding locally** was emphasised.
- **Choice is important** for parents and there was a view that, as with any student, the option to choose the best available education for a child should remain, irrespective of where they live.
- There was a view that **Specialist Provision and Centres of Excellence** will still be needed
- Some questioned if **locality working** might lead to increased bureaucracy and the need for additional resources and as such felt High Needs should remain centrally managed. Others felt that 3 localities across the county was not local enough, and that a District or sub-district level would be more appropriate.
- There was a view that the aim must be to make the **best possible local provision to achieve best possible educational outcomes** for children and young people with SEND
- The point was made that "**the underfunding of SEND is a national issue** caused by austerity measures taken by the Government and that it has to be considered whether a local response will be enough to challenge national circumstances."
- There is **widespread support for the involvement of parents** in coproducing a **countywide SEND strategy**.
- There is a strong view that **early intervention is paramount** in successfully meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND and that the **curriculum needs to be tailored** to meet needs.
- There was a view that **focused support at key transition points** is essential.
- It is considered that **universal training for staff in mainstream settings** focussed on meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND **is essential** and should be free of charge.
- There was overall support for **piloting special school hubs, provided that care was taken to ensure moves only took place when appropriate** and that children and young people are **well supported through any transitions**.
- There is **strong support for preparation for adulthood** in collaboration with all stakeholders and partners, and in particular based on the voice of the young person.
- There is **considerable support for strengthening the role of the SENCO, Family SENCO and the development of district SENCO** provided that the new appointments

at District level have a clear role and the appropriate skill set and experience, with the ability to hold schools to account.

- Overall there is **support for SFSS taking a lead role in facilitating multi-service/ multi-agency meetings**, provided that time is taken to develop systems and processes, which avoid duplication, and maximise the use and impact of available capacity and resources. There were a small number of specific detailed responses, emphasising the need for clarity about the distinctive roles of ICDS officers.
- There is **strong support to retain a countywide sensory team** with qualified specialist teachers, with additional mandatory accreditation.
- There is overall support for the **retention of TAs drawn from all teams in Localities** provided that they have an appropriate skill set.
- There is a clear view that **Safeguarding should be everyone's responsibility** and should not be the responsibility of only one member of staff.
- There is **strong support for SFSS developing new ways of working** within Localities, **provided that the current specialisms are retained.**
- There is **strong support for the retention of the current senior teacher roles in SFSS**, alongside a clear view that the development of a **third lead role with a focus on autism is essential.** There is a view that **autism cannot be the remit of only 1 practitioner.**
- There is support **for the development of a traded offer from SFSS, available to all schools**, although there are **some concerns that some schools may not be able to afford the training or may choose not to access it and that this may impact on the quality of provision.**

11. How will the locality model work in practice?

Arguably all of the above themes are addressed by the proposals, but understandably there were many questions as to how the proposed new locality model will work in practice.

These questions will be highlighted and responded to in the form of a Frequently Asked Questions document, which can be made available as part of the wider communication of the strategy and as part of the implementation process in the course of 2019-20. It is proposed that the detail of how locality arrangements will be delivered and implemented should be developed over the course of the summer term 2019 for implementation from September 2019. It is the intention that LA SEND officers from education support and the statutory assessment and placement service (ICDS) as appropriate will work closely with all partners to co-produce a locality working model that takes into account stakeholder views.

Other Options Considered

12. A number of individuals felt that the consultation did not provide any alternative or choice in terms of the proposals being made. This is due to the fact that this consultation sought stakeholder views on the proposals to implement the recommendations from the High Needs Review 2018. The reality is that options in relation to the escalating demand for High Need provision, coupled with a deficit in the High Need Budget are limited. The choice between collective responsibility and decision-making for the High Needs budget, or a free-for-all is clear cut, as reflected in the majority of consultation responses.

13. Other options considered and rejected as not viable were:

- a) Status Quo – This is not viable. It is evident that remaining with the current practice is not an option, as it would result in a continuation of an already spiralling deficit and would risk poorer outcomes for children and young people.
- b) Organisation of funding and SEND services by multi-academy trust (MAT), rather than by locality. This option was discussed at the pre-consultation meeting with MATs and MAT CEOs, but it was deemed as inappropriate, firstly as children and young people live in geographical locations, not in MAT footprints and secondly because not all schools are in MATs.

The proposals put forward are effectively deemed to be the only viable options, however there is scope to consider how these proposals can best be implemented.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Schools Forum:

1. notes the content of the report and in particular the overwhelmingly positive response to the proposals
2. commits to working positively with all publicly funded schools that they represent and the Local Authority to develop and implement plans to deliver the proposals
3. forms a working party to contribute to the development of the locality infrastructure, systems and processes, taking into account the views of respondents to the consultation, summarised in the themes above.

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