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**To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board 2**

**Date: Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Subject: SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy Refresh**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To report on the planned process that is underway, to coproduce a new Local Area SEND and AP strategy, which will reflect both the local and national context of increased demand and complexity of needs.
- 1.2 The joint strategy will have a clear focus on the Government's anticipated direction of travel, workforce capacity, sufficiency of specialist provision, joint commissioning and preparation for adulthood within a financially sustainable envelope. Most importantly, it will be coproduced with children, young people, their families and all partners.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
  - 1) Consider the information provided to comment and/or raise questions
  - 2) Identify any recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member

## **3 National Context**

- 3.1 The current SEND statutory system was enacted in 2014. In 2019 an All Party parliamentary committee published its report, concluding that the system was not fit for purpose. In response the Government committed to a major review. Consultation on reform to the system began in March 2022, "SEND Review: right support, right place, right time" and a SEND and alternative provision improvement plan was published in March 2023.
- 3.2 In December 2024, the current Education Committee launched a new enquiry, focused on "finding solutions to the crisis in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision. [Education Committee solving the send crisis major inquiry](#)
- 3.3 It is evident therefore that system reform will take time. Within this context demand for support across the system, but particularly for children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan; continues to grow significantly year on year both

nationally and locally. As a consequence the SEN system has become financially unsustainable and increased demand for both service and provision has created sufficiency challenges.

#### **4 Local Context**

- 4.1 The SEND and AP Partnership Board retains strategic oversight of demand growth across the City. Agencies work together to find solutions which require partnership and innovation. Examples include an integrated speech and language offer working with Speech and Language UK, the implementation of an integrated workforce strategy that targets training for school based staff (including both teaching assistants and teachers) and the development of specialist bases within mainstream schools (enhanced resource centres) supported by outreach from special schools.
- 4.2 In order to ensure that Coventry's local area SEND response is evidence based a [Coventry SEND & AP Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2024](#), (JSNA) was co- led by public health. The JSNA underpins the evidence base for commissioning across the partnership. It also informs the partnership self-evaluation framework (SEF) and supporting action plan. The refreshed JSNA, took into account the 2021 census data. It evidences in detail the significant change in population growth and ethnicity, particularly within the child population. It is agreed that the JSNA will continue to be refreshed at two yearly intervals.
- 4.3 Coventry's Local Area revised SEND and AP Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) was co-produced with all partners, including children and families. It was approved by the SEND and AP Partnership Board at its meeting in June 2024 and subsequently the Health and Well-being Board. The SEF is reviewed annually in readiness for the next academic year. It is noted that the SEF mirrors the new SEND and AP Local Area Inspection framework and will be a key document to support the pending inspection.
- 4.4 The partnership has identified six key thematic areas within the SEF as priority focus areas for the current academic year 2024/25. Priorities 1 to 4 relate to demand growth and the post pandemic impact on children's development, priority 5 was identified by young people and families, priority 6 is retained, to secure a continuing spotlight on Coventry's exemplary development of supported internships, with the intent of ensuring the offer continues to grow at pace.
- 4.5 The action plan embraces the Government's direction of travel as set out in the [Government SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan](#) and targets the partnership ambition to continue to:
  - expand capacity for early identification and intervention;
  - secure a skilled and confident workforce across the partnership with a clear focus on early years settings and schools;
  - expand the range of inclusive mainstream school provision;
  - deliver a sufficiency of local publicly funded specialist provision;
  - promote opportunities to expand the concept of an inclusive City which offers places to go and things to do;
  - deliver positive outcomes in adulthood including meaningful employment.

The six key thematic priorities drawn from the SEF, inform the joint local area SEND and AP action plan for the academic year 2024/25:

<b>Priority 1.</b>	School readiness - focus on child development in the pre-school years
<b>Priority 2.</b>	Workforce strategy
<b>Priority 3.</b>	Extending inclusive mainstream environments
<b>Priority 4.</b>	Sufficiency of local high quality publicly funded specialist placements
<b>Priority 5.</b>	Extending the Local Offer – promoting inclusive communities
<b>Priority 6.</b>	Expanding transition pathways into adulthood – focus supported internships

4.6 A strong focus has been placed on developing a workforce strategy, to support the capacity of mainstream schools to meet a growing level of special educational needs. This has been impactful and well received by schools and early years settings.

## 5 Review of Coventry Local Area SEND and AP Strategy

5.1 The current SEND and AP strategy: [Send Strategy-2019-to-2022-lifting-the-cloud-of-limitation](#) is under review, its development which will focus on coproduction, will be overseen by the Board alongside the finalisation of the supporting action plan

5.2 A partnership SEND Strategy workshop will be held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025 bringing a range of partners together to identify shared priorities. The work will be cascaded out to a range of stakeholder groups including children, young people and their families and education, health and care settings and services. The draft strategy is scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2025. It will then be presented for approval.

## 6 Health Inequalities Impact

6.1 There is no impact on health inequalities for these recommendations. However the SEND and AP strategy and supporting action plan, will aim to have a direct and positive impact on improving life outcomes for all children and young people who have identified additional needs.

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