

# Review of Special School and Mainstream Unit Provision



The County Council is fully committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for all children and young people and one of our enduring priorities is that all children should achieve their potential.

Lincolnshire has a large number and a broad range of very successful special schools and mainstream schools across phases. Our success in supporting children with special educational needs is very well evidenced. A significant majority of parents and carers expressed satisfaction regarding the provision made for their children.

The purpose of this review is to identify what more needs to be done to ensure that special schools and mainstream unit provision continue to be effective and responsive to the special educational needs of children and young people and taking into account parents and carers preferences. This report sets out a number of detailed recommendations which will take forward our agreed strategy. We are committed to working with schools, colleges and other providers to develop the opportunities that exist within the county and to provide a range of flexible progression routes which help to ensure that all children are able to be the best that they can be.

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## **Executive Summary**

The review has identified that there is much highly successful practice in Lincolnshire Special Schools and mainstream unit provision, with the significant majority of children and young people with special educational needs having their needs well met. As a consequence their achievement and progress is good or better in the significant majority of cases and are well prepared and equipped for life beyond school.

While provision is on the whole appropriate, its location is such that many children and young people cannot access the provision they require in their locality and as a consequence are required to travel unacceptably long distances in order to have their needs met (some children travel 2 hours at the beginning and the end of a school day). Furthermore the designation of that which may be available locally, its size and age range can limit the degree of choice available to children and young people and their parents. This is also the case for more inclusive practice, where despite the commitment of mainstream schools, the range of need that they can successfully meet is in part determined by the accommodation, resources and the necessary expertise of staff in both the schools and in their localities.

This review has identified the need to locate provision to meet the significant majority of special educational needs in each of the seven districts. The key strategy identified to address this is that of the “area special school”, where a wider range of needs are met, in larger schools than is currently the case in some areas of the authority and on more than one site in the case of federations between special schools. Such approaches are already in place in some districts of the authority and are proving to be successful in meeting the wider range of need for which they now cater. For this to be further extended will require the reconfiguring and the remodelling of existing provision where this is possible, building in those districts where specialist provision does not already exist and where appropriate, co-locate such provision on mainstream sites. Such co-location will provide the opportunity for more inclusive practice than is currently the case, being further enhanced by the development of further integrated specialist unit provision in mainstream schools; such as that being developed in the city of Lincoln for primary and secondary aged pupils as a part of the academies programme. To ensure that such provision is effective both now and in the future, will require greater flexibility in the funding arrangements for special schools and specialist unit provision than is currently the case.

The review identifies that the development of more locally based specialist provision needs to be part of a wider strategy by Lincolnshire County Council and other agencies to provide partnership services in the localities, rather than across the county, to ensure that the “whole child’s” needs are met. Furthermore the opportunities for greater partnership working between schools, colleges and providers will be enhanced through localised provision, with outreach support and continuing professional development being key to an effective, knowledgeable and confident workforce.

In accepting and implementing these recommendations as resources become available, Lincolnshire County Council and its partners will be well placed to meet the present and future needs of children and young people with special educational needs through a flexible range of locally based provision. This will provide the best possible opportunities for children and young people to achieve their potential at school and to access appropriate opportunities to prepare them for adulthood.

## Strategic Intent

The County Council's strategy for special school and all mainstream unit provision is framed by the recently launched (2009) local authority "Direction of Travel" which has the following key principles:

**Inclusion:** All children should attend a school in their locality with learning designed to meet their needs so that they have the potential to succeed.

**Localisation:** The provision of a range of partnership services to meet need in the localities rather than across the county.

**Personalisation:** Early and fast referral to services to meet the whole child's needs and those of the family (if appropriate).

**Effective Use of Resources:** Effective use of resources (removing unnecessary bureaucracy).

These are in turn supported by the County Council's commitment to:

*".....provide a flexible range of provision and support that can **respond to individual's SEN and parents and carers preferences** rather than necessarily establishing broad categories of provision according to SEN or disability". (Planning and Developing Special Educational Provision – Guidance and Exemplification 2009).*

This review to date has identified actions which will help realise the principles outlined above. Actions from this review need to be considered alongside the review of statementing and the special educational needs delegated funding review and changes that were made to practice last year and also the forthcoming report on strategic support services for special educational needs and disabilities. The remainder of this report identifies specific actions under 3 broad principles localisation, inclusion, and appropriate placements/effective use of resources.

## Localisation

- 1. Ensure that each district has the necessary specialist provision to cater for the significant majority of the current and future special school population in the area.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- The creation of specialist provision in North Kesteven and Boston that is of a sufficient size and with appropriate expertise to meet the significant majority of needs of those pupils who, at present attend a special school elsewhere, or may do so in the future.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- The majority of children and young people will be able to access appropriate special school provision in their locality, reducing the need to travel and enabling them to access support from other agencies and services more locally.

**Time Frame: This is a long term ambition to be realised over the next 10 years.**

- 2. Extend the introduction of the area special school\* model into each of the districts. This will enable a wider range of need to be met in each locality, with these needs being addressed in either new build/modified premises or through special schools working in partnership or through federation. Area special schools will have the remit to promote collaboration, inclusion and partnership working with mainstream schools through a programme of high quality “outreach” support and staff development opportunities. This will be further enhanced through locally based partnership working with health and other providers to ensure referral and access to specialist services is readily available.**

*(\*The area special school model excludes those pupils whose primary need is Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties).*

**This will be achieved by:**

- The development of purpose built area special school provision, designed to meet a wider range of need in those districts where suitable provision does not exist.
- The modification to existing special school buildings, where this is appropriate and possible, to accommodate a wider range of need.
- The use of surplus building stock, if appropriate, to provide additional space/phase specific opportunities as part of the area special school approach.
- Through partnership working with governing bodies; the hard federation of special schools to create area provision on more than one site, managed as a single institution, providing greater flexibility and a wider range of opportunities to children and young people.
- Outreach and partnership working will be promoted through those special schools with specialist status, through targeted funding by the authority to special schools in the seven districts and through the involvement of centrally managed support services.
- A review and realignment of existing centrally managed special support services to make best use of the support available, in partnership with that offered through special schools and managed more locally to ensure fast and easy referral in the districts.
- The area special schools being supported through the involvement of locally based integrated teams in each of the districts and an enhanced relationship with health providers to ensure the effective delivery of therapies and other health based interventions.

### **Impact for children and young people:**

- Children and young people will be able to access appropriate special school provision in their locality, reducing the need to travel and enabling them to access support from other specialist providers working in partnership with schools and parents and carers.
- Children and young people will be able to access a wider range of opportunities, and a more personalised offer, through joint working between schools and be able to do so at more than one site.
- Children and young people in special schools will access the level of support necessary for them to successfully experience mainstream learning and social opportunities as and when appropriate.
- Children and young people in mainstream schools will benefit from the expertise provided through outreach programmes supported by special school staff expertise, centrally managed support services and other specialist providers.
- Staff in schools will benefit from the professional development opportunities accessed through outreach programmes, specialist providers and a more comprehensive programme of tailored support offered by local and national training agencies.
- Children and young people's special educational needs will be more effectively met in their locality by other specialist providers working in partnership with parents/carers and schools.

**Time Frame: This is currently being realised through existing building programmes, ongoing federations, as part of a review of special school funding currently taking place and a review of centrally managed services to take place over the next 12 months.**

### **3. Address the constraints that current descriptors (used to define the population of special schools) impose on admissions and so increase parental choice in the localities.**

#### **This will be achieved by:**

- The introduction of the area special school model to all districts of the County.
- Improved "statements" that set out clearly the needs of the child and the expectations to be made of the school in addressing those needs.
- Through a revision to the funding formula for special schools, to produce a more flexible model of funding that is receptive to the needs of the individual and the school.

### **Impact for children and young people:**

- More children and young people will be able to access appropriate special school provision in their locality, reducing the need to travel and enabling them to access support from other agencies and services more locally.
- The level of funding made available to special schools will be better matched to the needs of individual children and young people, will be able to change over time to reflect a change in need and be consistent thus allowing schools to plan more effectively and for the longer term.

**Time Frame: A new funding formula for special schools will be introduced in April 2011. The authority has further improved the quality of statements and in particular the identification of need and level of provision required. The move towards area special schools is a long term ambition to be realised over the next ten years.**

**4. Reduce the need for children and young people with special educational needs to travel outside of their district to access the specialist provision that they require.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- There being suitable area special school provision in each of the districts, with sufficient expertise to meet the significant majority of pupil needs and of a size to respond to the needs of the district.
- High quality outreach programmes offered by special schools, centrally managed services and specialist providers to ensure that their needs can (where appropriate) be successfully met within the mainstream learning environment.
- A programme of professional development opportunities for teachers and support staff to enhance their knowledge and expertise.
- The creation of Designated Specialist Unit type provision, where appropriate, to enhance inclusion and widen choice.
- Increased opportunities to have needs met in a range of small unit provision operating in mainstream schools.
- An extended range of provision offered at 16 and 19 by a range of providers to meet the employment, education and training needs of young adults.
- The provision in each of the seven districts being sufficiently comprehensive, and of the highest quality so that parent preference and confidence is assured locally.
- Any plans regarding the future placement of children and young people currently in special school provision to attend a special school in their locality will be made with the agreement of parents and carers.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- Children and young people will be able to access high quality support in their locality.
- Children and young people will remain in their communities.
- Children and young people will be able to access specialist help from local providers.
- Children and young people will have the opportunity of choice.
- A reduced need for young adults to attend Independent Specialist Provision elsewhere in the country
- The need for excessive travel will be reduced.

**Time Frame: The need to reduce excessive travel for children and young people is key to the LA's short and longer term strategies. Special schools are being encouraged to work with the Local Authority to identify currently placed children and young people whose needs can be effectively met in provision closer to their homes.**

**5. Extend the use of mainstream unit provision to meet a wider range of special educational needs in the seven districts, to create more inclusive opportunities and a reduced need for travel.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- Building on the effective practice evidenced at Wyndham Park Nursery to extend the opportunity for the assessment of children with special educational needs into mainstream nursery settings and through the network of Children's Centres throughout the county.



- Access to specialist support offered through the Birth to Five Service and as part of a programme of outreach support offered from special schools.
- Identify and engage with those mainstream secondary schools with the capacity to make provision for an identified need(s) and provide the necessary capital and revenue funding, staffing and a programme of professional development to support: Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties, Autism, more Moderate Learning Difficulties (as defined by an agreed descriptor) and Physical Disabilities/Medical needs.
- Expertise being provided to staff and pupils in identified unit provision by special schools, centrally managed support services and other specialist providers.
- The development of an “Inclusion Standard” as part of the programme of professional development opportunities offered by the local authority and other providers.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- Early assessment and intervention in an inclusive mainstream environment in their locality.
- Access to specialist inclusive provision in primary schools in their locality.
- Access to specialist inclusive provision in secondary schools in their locality.
- An opportunity to access high quality inclusive provision.
- A reduced need to travel.

**Time Frame: Early assessment and identification is now well established in the authority, the move towards more inclusive pre-school placements will be incremental and based on further developing the expertise and confidence of providers. The development of an extended range of mainstream unit provision will initially focus on the needs of pupils with Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties over the next three years. The Inclusion Standard will be introduced in 2012.**

**6. Provide a range of partnership services to meet the need in the localities rather than across the county, with fast and easy referral to services.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- The configuration of the integrated teams into 3 geographic areas supporting the seven districts.
- The work of the Local Children’s Partnerships.
- The use of the Common Assessment Framework in the localities.
- The use of “Team Around the Child”/“Early Support and Care Coordination” to meet the needs of children and young people in a co-ordinated and planned manner.
- Where appropriate, the co-location of support agencies and providers onto school sites (e.g. Warren Wood Community Special School, Gainsborough).

**Impact for children and young people:**

- Fast and easy referral to appropriate services.
- Support offered and accessed in the locality.
- Support offered to meet the whole needs of the child and their family (if appropriate).
- Greater access to specialist and targeted support in school.

**Time Frame: This has been established across the seven districts, with the more recent move to three Local Children’s Partnerships being central to a regional programme of sustainable integrated support.**



## **Inclusion**

- 7. Build the capacity, competence and confidence of mainstream educational settings to provide for greater numbers of children and young people with special educational needs.**

**Build capacity, confidence and competence in special schools to provide for more complex needs.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- Outreach programmes designed to meet the needs of children and young people through professional development programmes offered to staff.
- Extending the role of centrally managed support services to develop the skills base of mainstream school staff.
- A programme of bespoke training offered locally and through the region to develop the role and expertise of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO).
- Bespoke training offered to support the effective inclusion of special educational needs in mainstream schools, e.g. Primary, Secondary and Special School Eklan training for Speech, Language and Communication Needs.
- Through partnership working between special schools and Designated Specialist Unit provision, providing opportunities for expertise to be shared and for staff to work across institutions.
- In consultation with governing bodies; through the federation of special schools, providing opportunities for expertise to be shared and for staff to work across institutions.
- Through the development of area special schools, bringing together staff teams from existing special schools.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- Being educated and supported by a knowledgeable, experienced and confident staff team in both the mainstream and special school sector in their locality.

**Time Frame: There is much good practice already in place to inform further development in these areas. These activities remain key to delivering longer term ambitions over the next 10 years.**

- 8. Co-locate special school provision onto mainstream school sites, when and as the opportunity arises, to enhance opportunities for inclusive practice.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- The use of the Designated Specialist Unit provision created at The Priory Witham and City of Lincoln Academies to meet the needs of 100 statemented pupils in partnership with Lincoln city special schools (subject to adherence to the regulations outlined in the Code of Practice, Special Educational Needs -2001).
- Replication of the Designated Specialist Unit model in future academies, where such provision would enhance the range of provision in the localities and where the development is supported as part of a capital programme.
- Designated Specialist Unit type provision being located in community schools.

- Replicating the area special school model established in Gainsborough on the Trent Valley Academy/Aegir Community Special School site (Gainsborough Educational Village).

**Impact for children and young people:**

- Suitable provision is made for those children and young people for whom inclusive practice is appropriate and/or preferred.
- The environment is suitably adapted to ensure that it does not inhibit the individual needs of the children and young people and/or the progress that they make.
- The opportunity to access high quality specialist provision and resources in a mainstream environment in the children and young people's locality.

**Time Frame: Provision will be made on the Priory Witham and Priory City of Lincoln Academies from September 2011 and 2012 respectively. Future provision of this type is a long term ambition to be realised over the next 10 years.**

9. **Ensure a clear understanding on the part of special schools, and mainstream unit and Designated Specialist Unit provision with regards the nature of the provision and the intended outcomes to be achieved.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- A commissioned specification for mainstream unit provision and Designated Specialist Unit provision with clearly stated terms of reference vis a vis responsibilities and accountabilities.
- Detailed descriptions within statements of special educational need to be met, the provision to be made and the expected outcomes to be achieved.
- Extension of the Local Authority Monitoring and Accountability Framework for Delegated Special Educational Needs and Disability Funding to include special schools and mainstream unit provision.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- Clearly defined offer and outcomes in relation to their personalised needs.

**Time Frame: Commissioning requirements and terms of reference for mainstream unit provision and Designated Specialist Units will be drafted over the next 12 months. All new statements will fully reflect the needs of the child and the provision to be made by schools and other agencies, a systematic review of existing statements will take place over the next 12 months to ensure that they accurately reflect the needs of individual children and young people. The Local Authority Monitoring and Accountability Framework will be revised over the next 12 months to take account of funding for special school and mainstream unit provision.**

**10. Reduce the reliance on Out of County provision for children and young people with complex and/or “low incidence” needs through the use of locally available residential (and where appropriate day) provision.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- Introducing an agreed Local Authority protocol for the use of residential provision in special schools.
- More effective partnership working between special schools and social care residential provision.
- Accommodating a wider range of need in existing residential provision than is currently the case.
- Retaining schools identified as being a “county resource” (Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties, Physical Disability and Medical), where otherwise provision may have to be sought out of county for those pupils with the greatest complexity of need.
- Recognition on the part of the authority that for a small number of children and young people an out of county placement is the most appropriate option.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- Having their needs met more locally.
- Being able to access education and care through a single provider within the county when and as appropriate.
- Greater opportunity to access a more flexible residential programme than is currently the case.
- The opportunity to access residential accommodation locally at 19, as part of an integrated programme of ongoing education, employment and training.
- Being able to access an out of county placement if it is the most appropriate option.

**Time Frame: A review to be undertaken over the next 12 months to identify how best to use the limited residential provision available in the authority to minimise the need for out of county provision.**

**11. Effectively respond to the needs of Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities 16 - 19 and to reduce the need for residential placements with Independent Specialist Providers.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- Effective partnership working by LA staff, parents and carers and the young person to ensure that the Statement of Special Educational Need and the 139a Assessment (at 16 or 19), accurately reflect the needs to be met at transition and that the most appropriate learning environment to support the young person is identified.
- Working with post 16 providers to plan for and provide (in so far as is possible) a comprehensive programme of suitable education, employment and training in the seven districts.
- Working with special schools with residential provision to create suitable opportunities in the county for those young people who historically have had to live elsewhere to have their ongoing educational needs met at 19.
- Providing greater flexibility of placements between special schools and post 16 and post 19 providers.
- Providing post 16 opportunities in area special schools for those young people who cannot have their needs successfully met by local providers.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- A more informed assessment of their longer term needs will ensure a suitable educational placement leading to more successful outcomes.
- Improved transition arrangements at 16 and 19 between school, provider and the Young People's Learning Agency.
- Access to more localised provision that is personalised to meet individual needs.
- Residential provision that allows young people to stay in the county and so more readily access their family, friends and community.
- A greater range of provision at 16 and 19 to meet planned needs.
- Post 16 provision in area special schools for those young people for whom it is appropriate.

**Time Frame: A review is currently being undertaken of specialist post 16 provision to determine future needs. This will inform practice from September 2011.**

**12. Address the limitations created as a result of the small size of some special schools and/or the suitability of their buildings and through remodelling or reconfiguration successfully meet current and future demand.****This will be achieved by:**

- Meeting the needs of pupils in larger area special schools built; 1) through the expansion of suitable existing special school sites and the reconfiguration of those that cannot be remodelled 2) through co-location onto a mainstream site 3) through federation and 4) as stand alone new builds.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- More children and young people will be able to access appropriate special school provision (in a transformed learning environment) in their locality, reducing the need to travel and enabling them to receive support from other agencies and services more locally.
- The opportunities offered to and the arrangement made to meet the needs of children and young people aged 3 -19 will be enhanced through greater capacity locally, improved resources and enhanced provision.
- Access to inclusion opportunities when and as appropriate.

**Time Frame: As part of the long term ambition for equity of provision in each of the districts.**

**13. Secure a more collaborative approach to meeting the special educational needs of children and young people in the districts by encouraging greater partnership working between special schools, special schools and mainstream schools and special schools and the further education and training provider sector.**

**This will be achieved by:**

- Partnership working with governing bodies to secure the “hard” federation of schools where it is judged to be in the best interests of the pupils and the wider community.
- The “soft” federation of schools and providers to secure greater flexibility of working to better meet the needs of the district.
- Partnerships between special schools and post 16 providers to create robust 14 -19 learning pathways (supported by the Young Peoples Learning Agency).
- The amalgamation of special schools to increase flexibility of working, to reduce replication of resources and most importantly to enhance the opportunities available to pupils.

**Impact for children and young people:**

- Children and young people will be able to access a wider range of learning and social opportunities through joint working between schools and other providers and be able to do so at more than one site.
- Children and young people will be able to access a wider range of personalised curriculum experiences.
- Children and young people will be able to access more social opportunities through access to a wider range of extended provision.
- Children and young people will be better placed to have their wider needs met in their locality.

**Time Frame: This is an ongoing strategy across the authority and is well supported by the Local Authority and CfBT Lincolnshire School Improvement Service. A review is currently being undertaken of specialist post 16 provision to determine future needs, this will inform practice from September 2011.**

## **Background Information**

There are currently 21 special schools in Lincolnshire with 1634 places purchased by the LA on an annual basis. While this is a higher number of schools than may be found in other authorities consideration needs to be given to the size and rurality of the authority, the small size of some schools and other factors such as the number of out of county placements made on an annual basis (Lincolnshire County Council – 78, with neighbouring authorities reporting their out of county numbers as being 111, 147, 221, 227).

Special school numbers have grown over the past 5 years, with 310 additional places being purchased since 2004/5. It needs to be noted that much of this has been planned growth to accommodate Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties/Severe Learning Difficulties/Autistic Spectrum Disorder and as a result in the change of role for the Hospital School. Unplanned growth has been in the region of 8.2% or 135 places.

The quality of Lincolnshire's special schools as judged by the Lincolnshire School Improvement Service and Ofsted is consistently of a high standard, with pupil achievement and progress being never less than satisfactory and for the significant majority of special schools good or better. Overall Ofsted grades for special schools are better than those achieved by statistical neighbours and nationally. Recently introduced Performance Management software is proving to be of value in providing special schools and the Local Authority with robust performance data for pupils and for and about schools, with the facility to compare pupils and schools on a like for like basis nationally.

Of the 21 schools six have been replaced by new builds (4 x Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties under Private Finance Initiative and 2 x area special schools), an analysis of suitability and shortfall indicates that of the remaining schools only **four** are suitable for further remodelling/enlarging.

The location of special schools and their designation (Moderate Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties, etc) requires a disproportionate number of pupils to travel both in and across districts to have their needs met, the annual cost of travel in 2009/10 being **£7,083,703**. This need to travel is exacerbated by schools specialising to such a degree that they become a "county resource" by default (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and a preferred option for many parents.

The imbalance of provision by district is stark, with some (Lincoln City, South Kesteven, East Lindsey) having a breadth of provision and others North Kesteven and Boston have none or very limited. As a consequence of this lack of provision some 191 pupils leave North Kesteven each day to attend a special school elsewhere in the county, with 91 pupils doing the same in Boston (figures correct June 2010).

The authority has four Behaviour Emotional Social Difficulties schools and a single Physical Difficulties/Medical school; these are deemed "county resource", with the former accommodating pupils whose needs would not be successfully met in more generic specialist provision elsewhere and the latter providing for low incidence need that requires specialised support, resources and access. These schools are a significant factor in relation to the relatively low numbers of pupils who are educated out of county.

The authority maintains three special schools with residential provision, with places being managed by the respective schools based on the need to access independence opportunities, extended learning, a 24 hour curriculum and/or social/behavioural needs. One school offers respite care during school closure periods as a commissioned activity in partnership with health and social care. More recent partnership working between a special school and residential children's home is proving effective in meeting the needs of children and young people who would otherwise have to travel significant distances and/or attend a school out of the county.

The recently built area special schools in Gainsborough are successful in meeting the needs of a far wider range of need than has been the case, providing a base for outreach to be offered to the locality and accessing opportunities for inclusion through co-location. This serves to confirm that the area special school model is an appropriate option for the future.

An aspect of this review is to:

*“.....deliver an agreed detailed delivery plan for the configuration of Lincoln city, being responsive to the time frame for the redevelopment of the Witham and City Academy sites”.*

This work is ongoing and will be reported on in December 2010. To date purposeful meetings have been held with stakeholders and a clarity as to the future use of the 100 Designated Specialist Unit places through partnership working between the academies and special schools is emerging. This configuration of provision in Lincoln and augmented provision elsewhere will result over time in the reduced need for one special school in the city.

Outreach is offered by the majority of special schools, for some this is ad hoc, for others it is as a result of additional funding from the authority and/or as a result of specialist status. While the provision is of a good quality there is little coordination of this work and the authority had done little to evaluate the impact, even where it has directly funded the activity. Outreach is not a feature of the work of the mainstream unit provision, despite the expertise and experience of the staff teams and the transition to alternative mainstream placements for the majority of pupils on leaving.

Post 16 provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities is now the responsibility of the Local Authority in partnership with the Young Peoples Learning Agency. Lincolnshire has in the past had a high level of dependence on Independent Specialist Provider places at 16 and 19, as a consequence the need to develop provision more locally has been compromised. Changes to funding regimes, an expectation on the part of the Young Peoples Learning Agency for authorities to reduce their dependence on Independent Specialist Providers and the potential to secure pump priming funding to develop provision more locally are all key drivers for change. A substantial review of current provision and future needs will be undertaken in the autumn term (2010) to determine the way forward to better meet the needs of young people in the county.

Mainstream unit provision is offered for primary and secondary aged pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties and hearing impairment. Provision for the former is offered in units in three primary schools around the county and for secondary aged pupils through an outreach service (Extended Communication and Language Impairment Provision for Schools (ECLIPS)) based at sites in the north and south of the county. Hearing Impaired provision is offered at one primary site and two secondary sites. This is augmented by outreach provision offered by centrally managed support services. Given the location of each of these units, travel is inevitable for the large majority of the pupils. The evaluation of the impact of this provision by the Local Authority is very limited, there are no terms of reference attached to funding and no measurable outcomes identified. As a consequence the nature and the quality of the provision remains largely unchecked other than through the review of statement, Ofsted inspection and the work of the Educational Psychology Service and School Improvement Partner. Evidence sourced at school/service level serves to suggest that the progress made by pupils is positive, with the significant majority returning to mainstream schools in their locality and being supported by Primary Care Trust therapists, the Extended Communication and Language Impairment Provision for Schools team and or specialist teachers in the secondary sector for the hearing impaired. The level of funding accessed through purchased places is sufficient to meet demand, however the lack of any significant evaluation by the authority on an annual basis means that funding levels in the secondary sector lack consistency given that they are not directly linked to the take up of places.



Speech and language provision is also funded at St Lawrence Special School, the intention being for the authority to offer a viable in-county placement to those pupils who might historically have required out of county provision. To date the impact of this strategy has been very limited, although the provision is used to good effect by the school for its own pupils.

Consultation has been a strong feature of this review with a number of "boards" being established at the outset, with membership being drawn from a wide range of stakeholders. A programme of consultative events for parents provided them with background information to the review, the challenges faced by and the potential opportunities available to the Local Authority in the future. Parental response was quite correctly focused to the more immediate needs of their children, the lack of appropriate provision in some areas (in particular for Autistic Spectrum Disorder), the poor experiences in mainstream schools for some pupils, the difficulties faced by parents and children at transition, the profound frustration caused to parents by the statementing process, difficulties with transport and a strength of feeling that their (the parents) child's needs should not be compromised by any proposed changes to the present system. Similar meetings held for governors served to confirm the commitment that governors have for their schools and also a willingness to enter into dialogue with the authority to ensure provision is best suited to the future needs of the authority.

## **Conclusions**

The location of special school provision, the categorisation of special schools by broad need, the ad hoc arrangements in place to support more inclusive practice through outreach and the limited bespoke facilities in the mainstream to respond to greater complexities of need, is such, that the longer term needs of the authority and the aspirations as set out in the "Direction of Travel" cannot be successfully met in the future without the reconfiguration of existing special school provision. With such reconfiguration including the investment in new provision (special school and mainstream unit) if the needs of the localities are to be effectively met.

During the review period a number of challenges have emerged nationally and locally that will compromise the extent to which any substantive changes can be brought about, these include:

- *The government stated intention that they will, "call a moratorium on the ideological closure of special schools and end the bias towards the inclusion of special needs in mainstream schools".*
- *The termination of the Building Schools for the Future programme.*
- *Academy status for "outstanding mainstream schools" from September 2010.*
- *A lack of information regarding new build/re-build proposals for those moved to academy status by the previous administration.*
- *The introduction of academy status to special schools from September 2011.*
- *The introduction of "free schools".*
- *Significant budget cuts to government departments and local authorities.*
- *Impact of the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.*
- *Changes to the funding arrangements for Special Educational Needs in Lincolnshire mainstream schools from 2011.*
- *Ofsted Report on Special Educational Needs - autumn 2010.*
- *Announcement by Government of a major review of Special Educational Needs in England in the autumn, stated to be wide reaching and the most important since the Warnock Report in 1981.*

**As a consequence the County Strategy should be drafted, taking into account the constraints that the above will impose and the potential impact they will have on the extent to which the Local Authority can deliver the, "major organisational changes to special school provision," referred to in the Building Schools for the Future submission (Jan 2010).**

# **Publications - The National Context**

## **1996 Education Act**

Requires Local Authorities to secure sufficient schools to provide primary and secondary education in their area. In exercising their functions under this section, LAs are also required to have regard to “the needs for securing that special educational provision is made for pupils who have special educational needs” (section 14, paragraph 6b).

## **Planning and developing special educational provision – a guide for local authorities and other providers (DCSF – 2007)**

Further guidance provided to support LAs in meeting their statutory requirements.

## **Planning and developing special educational provision - National Strategies 2009**

Guidance and exemplification of 2007 DCSF publication

## **Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2001**

This is a substantive and complex document detailing the role of the local authority and partner agencies in identifying, assessing, planning and providing provision for children and young people with special educational needs.

## **Removing Barriers to Achievement – Government SEN Strategy 2004**

This summarises the government’s 10 year programme for Special Educational Needs and inclusion and was developed to accompany the implementation of Every Child Matters and the Children’s National Service Framework.

## **Inclusion: Does it Matter where Pupils are Taught – Ofsted 2006**

This report examines the factors that promote good outcomes across a range of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. It found that effective provision was distributed equally between special and mainstream schools when key factors were securely embedded, with the best outcomes being achieved in resourced provision in mainstream schools.

## **Aiming Higher for Disabled Children (HM Treasury 2007)**

“Aiming Higher for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families”, will improve service provision across the board for disabled children and their families, and enhance – equality of opportunity for them.

The review had three areas of focus to improve the lives of disabled children and their families:

- Access and empowerment
- Responsive services and timely support
- Improved quality and capacity

## **Quality Standards for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support and Outreach Services - DCSF 2008**

The standards are not mandatory, but are designed to be used as suggested markers against which service providers can be evaluated. Specifically the standards are designed to lead to improved outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and

disabilities. They contribute directly to the achievement of the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people.

### **Support for Pupils with Special Educational Needs – Policy Statement and Development Strategy (Lincolnshire County Council 2004)**

#### **The Children Act (2004) and Every Disabled Child Matters Charter (2008)**

Every Child Matters has, as its focus, improved outcomes for all children and young people including those who have Special Educational Needs/learning difficulties and disabilities and require public services to work in partnership to provide integrated support, service and provision.

#### **“Narrowing the Gap” National Strategies, (March 2009)**

Narrowing the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils and their peers is the responsibility of all stakeholders and a key challenge for every school and LA.

#### **Disability and Discrimination Act and Disability Equality Duty**

This act and duty requires public bodies to have “due regard” to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life;
- Take steps to take account of a disabled person’s disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

#### **Government Response to the Education Select Committee report (October 2006)**

The government suggested a national review by Ofsted in the 2008/9 school year (now deferred to 2009/10), setting the following as their immediate priorities for Special Educational Needs in 2009:

- Building capacity in the children’s workforce to identify and meet children’s needs.
- Promote a flexible continuum of local provision.
- Improve accountability for the outcomes that children achieve.
- Strengthen partnerships with parents and children.
- Improve decision making for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and children with autism.