Summary:
The purpose of this review report is:

“To identify whether provision in Lincolnshire special schools and specialist mainstream units successfully meets the needs of statemented pupils and is fit for purpose both now and in the future.

The review will summarise existing provision and its effectiveness in meeting the current and future needs within the recently revised locally based structure based on the three areas.

To provide a strategy and delivery plan for affordable, locally based provision which minimises differences between areas; maximises similarities; is not subject to or driven by ad hoc decision making in relation to enhanced provision; does not create perverse incentives and which minimises the need for extensive travel for children and young people.”

(Source: LCC commissioning paper).

This paper summarises the following report written in response to the commissioning document:

• Review and Reconfiguration of Special School and Mainstream Unit Provision – summary document.

Actions Required:
The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and discuss the recommendations from the Special School and Mainstream Unit Provision Review, as detailed below:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

**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.

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

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.

10. Reduce the reliance of 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.

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.

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.

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.
1. Background

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.

2. Conclusion

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the findings and recommendations of this review.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

Not applicable.

4. Appendices

| Appendix A | Review of Special School and Mainstream Unit Provision – summary paper. |

5. Background Papers

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<th>Where the document can be viewed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Review and Reconfiguration of Special School and Mainstream Unit Provision – Review Report, Conclusions and Recommendations and Appendices</td>
<td>Given the size of this document (199 pages) a copy of this report (either on a disk or as a hard copy) with the confidential pupil data removed, can be obtained from Sara Gregory at <a href="mailto:sgregory@cfbt.com">sgregory@cfbt.com</a> or telephone 01522 553276.</td>
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