



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	03 September 2021
Subject:	High Needs Transformation Programme Update

Summary:

This report provides the Committee members with an update on the High Needs Transformation Programme.

Actions Required:

The Committee is invited to seek assurance regarding the purpose and progress of the High Needs Transformation Programme.

1. Background

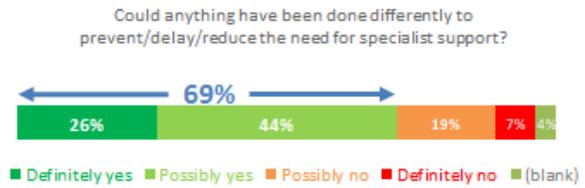
High Needs Transformation Programme

A key aim of the Government's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms (2014) was to promote high quality SEN support in schools, enabling more children to have their needs met without the need for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Another aim was to strengthen inclusion within mainstream schools so that the vast majority of pupils with an ECHP could be educated alongside their peers.

Over the last few years there has been a rise nationally in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) who are educated in special rather than mainstream schools. This increase has put a significant pressure on the availability of local provision for children with SEND as well as our High Needs Block (HNB).

Lincolnshire's rise in EHCPs was sharper than both the regional and national averages creating unsustainable pressure within the system. To understand and mitigate the rising demand, Lincolnshire County Council commissioned IMPOWER to work in partnership with the Local Authority (LA) to review SEND and high needs support.

This review found that there were significant opportunities to intervene earlier. In 69% of the cases reviewed by multi-agency professionals it was felt that something could have been done differently to prevent, delay or reduce the need for high level specialist support.



Reviewers who stated something could have been done differently often felt that available services had not been used, or there was lack of evidence of a robust graduated approach. It was considered that there were children with all types of special educational needs where the need for an EHCP could have been avoided but particularly for Communication and Interaction, and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

IMPOWER Key Findings October 2019



Reviewers identified missed opportunities across family support, including local groups, parenting programmes and mental health support. Therefore, there are opportunities to enhance early intervention for children and young people with SEND, in order to minimise the need for high level support.

Working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including young people; parents; early years' providers; schools and post-16 providers; and local authority officers, and in collaboration with Impower consultancy and Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum, we have developed a High Needs Strategy defining our inclusive ambition as follows:

1. Children and young people, parent/carers and professionals will have a strong understanding of the graduated approach and support available in Lincolnshire. Children and families will feel supported by their community and have confidence with the SEND system, because the right support is provided at the right time.

2. Mainstream settings have strong knowledge and understanding of supporting children with additional needs and are able to use sophisticated ways to teach social and emotional skills. Settings are able to work together with families to ensure that the home environment reflects the support taking place within the school practice, in order to best meet a child or young person's needs.
3. We will move away from exclusions to recognise that behaviour is a communication of need. In response to this need professionals are able to wrap services around a child, helping to meet their need in an inclusive way.
4. We will have high aspirations for our children and young people with additional needs, using plans to help meet needs and achieve outcomes, meaning higher academic achievement, increased personal resilience, increased socialisation and more resilient adults after education.

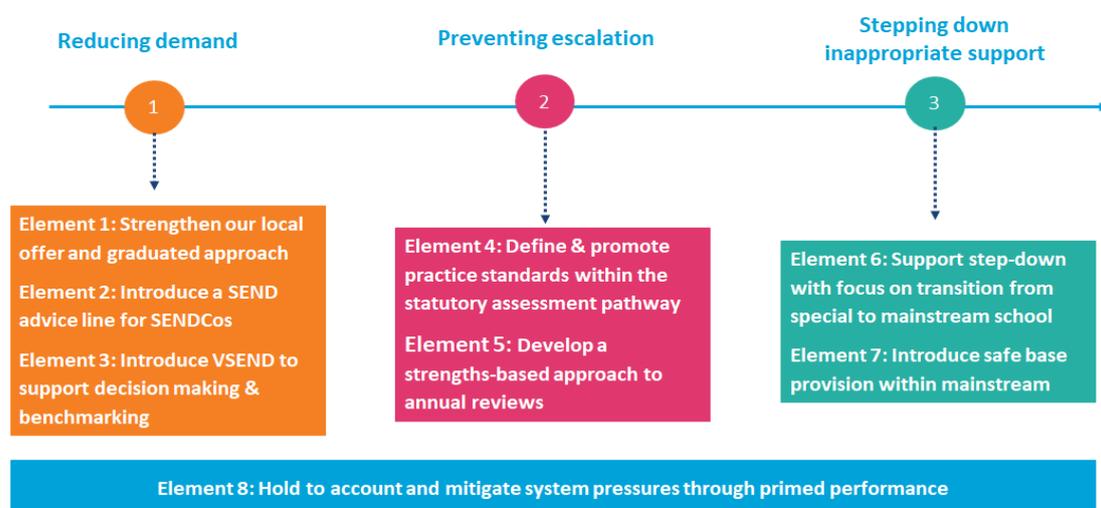
High Needs Strategy

Lincolnshire High Needs Strategy 2021-23 (HNS) is underpinned by a moral and ethical commitment to strengths-based practice, and the social model of SEND which is about removing the barriers to access, rather than focusing on 'within child' deficits. See Appendices A and B for HNS.

There are eight essential elements detailed in the High Needs Strategy designed to translate the strength based vision into reality in practice.

Eight elements | Planned work improves outcomes right across the child's journey

The High Needs Strategy is based on eight elements of work, each of which has an internal workstream. These elements are designed to deliver right across the high needs system:



Reducing Demand at Front Door

The first three workstreams (shown below) focus on the graduated approach, improving earlier identification and support to meet needs and reduce new demand.

- **One: Strengthen our local offer and graduated approach**
- **Two: Introduce a SEND advice line for SENDCos**
- **Three: Introduce VSEND to support decision making and benchmarking**

Lincolnshire Local Offer

The revised [Local Offer](#) is now live on the new JADU platform and feedback is positive including that the new site is easier to navigate and more user friendly.

"Everything works so much better than it did before – WELL DONE!" (Lincs Young Voices)

"Much more visually appealing ...

Blocks of content not overwhelming and clear differentiation between content" (Health Manager)

SEND Local Offer

Lincolnshire's Local Offer - find everything you need to know about SEND in one place

The Local Offer brings together information for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.

Search for services >

- Where to start with SEND**
About the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) local offer.
- Early years and childcare**
Information about children's centres, portage and health visitors.
- Wellbeing advice**
Local health services available to children and young people with SEND.
- Support with education**
How to choose a school, move into further education and get transport.
- Preparing for adulthood**
Jobs, money, housing and transition from children to adult's services.
- Your views and feedback**
Share your views about how you think we can improve our Local Offer.

LOCAL OFFER LINCOLNSHIRE

Quick links

- [Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) programme](#)
- [Identify and support SEND](#)
- [Local SEND information, advice and support](#)
- [Read the SEND Code of Practice](#)
- [Help with childcare costs](#)
- [Tell Us How We Can Improve](#)

Ask SALL - advice for professionals

Are you eligible for free childcare?

Valuing SEND and Inclusion Toolkit

Valuing SEND and the SEND Inclusion Toolkit offer a comprehensive, one-stop shop for support in delivering the graduated approach. Training sessions have been widely available and the Inclusion Toolkit is currently being piloted with a number of schools and Early Years settings in advance of its launch more widely in Lincolnshire. Feedback is extremely positive with testers saying the toolkit is extremely helpful to their role. Work will shortly commence to develop digital versions of both the Inclusion Toolkit and VSEND to enable quick and easy access to a range of resources.

"I love [the SEND Inclusion Toolkit] already - just been to the Sensory section, found a great website and shared that with staff working with a little boy with profound hearing loss" (SENDCo /Deputy Head)

"Valuing SEND is simple and strategic. Its scale and statements provide information without jargon and this is crucial for getting parents on board. It really brings clarity to the graduated approach for staff and parents." (SENDCo)

“The use of VSEND helped build our School Development Plan and to see where there were holes” (Head teacher)

Ask SALL (SEND Advice Line for Lincolnshire)

The Ask SALL team has supported 220 settings since September, providing the right support at the right time for almost 400 children with additional needs. The team behind Ask SALL are experts in the graduated approach and the local offer with 75% of calls resolved in the first consultation without escalation to a one-off appointment with an Educational Psychologist (EP); this is undoubtedly contributing to the reduction in system wide pressure. Each consultation is an intervention in itself, maximising the strengths and networks of each individual practitioner.

- Ask SALL has reduced the likelihood for statutory SEND services in 50% of cases, where settings indicated a request for assessment was a likely option upon contact. This has potentially prevented 60 cases progressing into the statutory process, due to SALL intervention.
- Of those most complex cases that progress to a one-off EP appointment, 60% are prevented from entering the statutory SEND arena.
- An incredible 78% of all cases who have received SALL advice have not so far requested an EHC Needs Assessment (EHCNA) after contact.

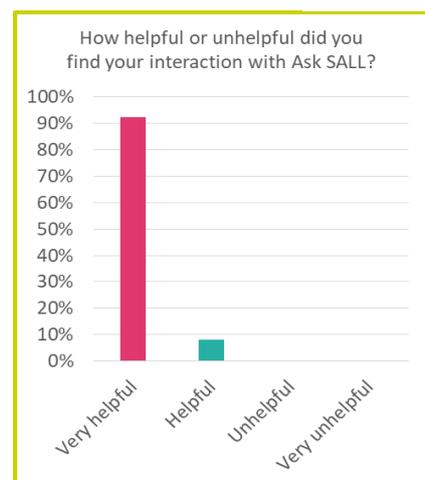
The low numbers of requests for EHCNA following contact with Ask Sall demonstrates early signs of impact and potential cost avoidance as the needs of children and young people are being met earlier and escalation of needs prevented. The advisors are now proactively engaging with settings who most need support through a relationship management approach and to date have engaged with almost 50% of all Lincolnshire primary schools and 50% of all Lincolnshire secondary schools.

Feedback is overwhelmingly positive with 100% of respondents saying they would ‘definitely’ use the service again.

“Knowledgeable [staff] and made you feel as though someone understood the issues presented and offered solutions or a pathway to solving an issue.”

“Thank you and your team for the amazing service again, it is such a valuable service we are so lucky to have. It saves time and focuses our support with children and families in school to where it needs to be; directly with them.”

Figure A

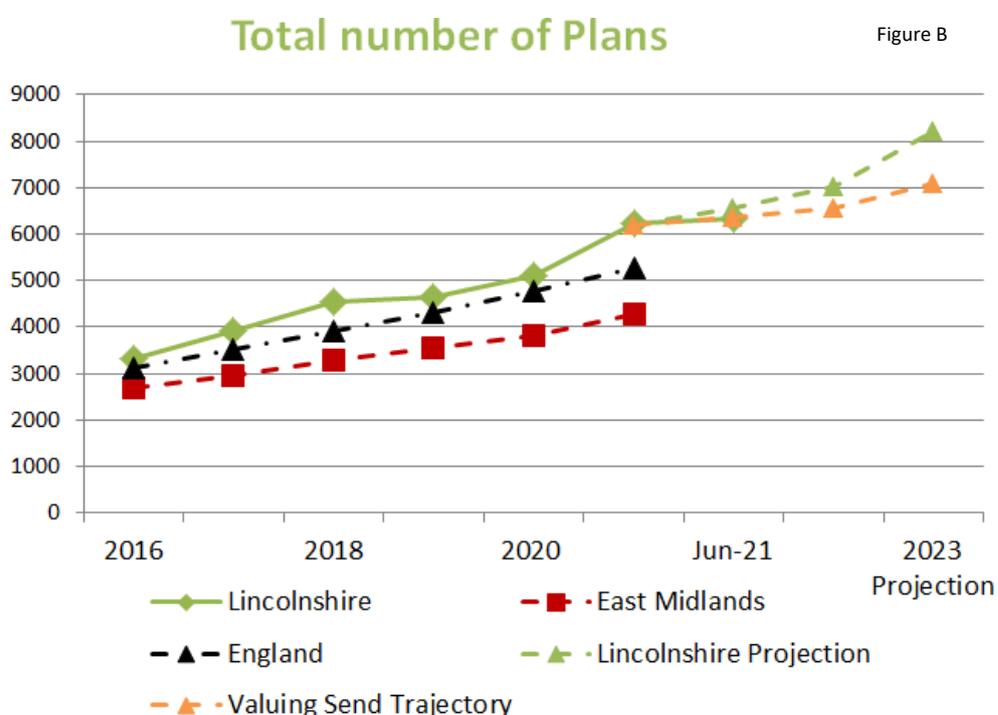


Preventing Escalation - Right Support, at Right Time in the Right Place

Workstreams Four and Five identify improvements to statutory SEND and more robust practice standards reducing escalation of need and ensuring children and young people are receiving the right support, at the right time and in the right place.

- **Four: Define and promote practice standards within the statutory assessment pathway**
- **Five: Develop a strengths-based approach to annual reviews**

The overall number of plans in Lincolnshire, 6,324 in June, remains below Lincolnshire's ambitious trajectory (10% decrease). This is a result of fewer requests in the period after lockdown, the interventions of Ask SALL and the robust evaluation, challenge and support of the newly introduced allocation panel as part of the statutory assessment pathway.



Impact of Covid

There were 76,000 initial requests for an EHC plan in England during 2020, down from 82,300 in 2019 and the first decrease since EHC plans were introduced. This is an 8% decrease on the previous year. Lincolnshire saw a 23% reduction in 2020. The 15% difference indicates the impact of the early Transformation work.

Allocations Panel

The aim of the early intervention strategies is to change culture and practice so that only appropriate requests for an EHC Needs Assessment are made. The robust process at the multidisciplinary six week allocations panel evaluates all requests, with the child at the centre, to ensure only those who need a full assessment have this undertaken. This

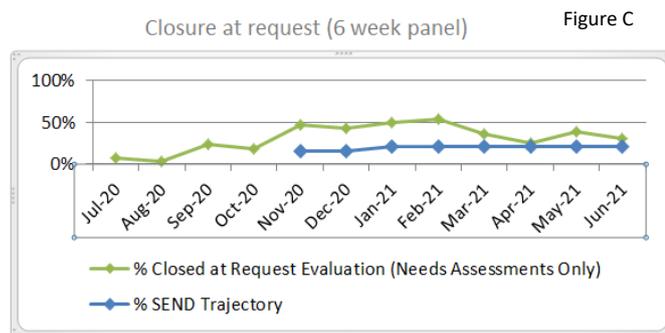
approach is not about reducing assessments by a specific target number but is about ensuring the right support for individual children is provided in the most appropriate way. Full feedback is provided for those which do not progress to assessment to identify how needs can be managed through the graduated approach. This includes a follow up call from Ask SALL where appropriate support and actions required are discussed.

Whilst we remain under the predictive number of new requests, we have seen an increase in numbers requesting assessment over the last few months. This is expected in the later part of the academic year due to settings progressing requests before a child moves year groups, which may be due to a level of anxiety about transition to new phase of education (YR or Y7). In addition, more children have returned to school and are visible as we come out of lockdown. Anxiety about transition is not a reason to request a Needs Assessment and the number of requests declined at the Panel reflects this.

- **2018/19 average - 100 requests per month**
- **September 2020 to June 2021 - average 83 requests per month (17% decrease)**

The percentage of requests not converting to full assessments also remains above our Ambition Trajectory (31% in June) - see Figure C.

- **Trajectory 5% reduction in requests converting to full assessments**
- **2018/19 average = 92.2% of requests converted to full assessment**
- **September 2020 to June 2021 = 60% of requests converted to full assessment (32.2% decrease)**



Prior to the Panel, on average 85% of requests proceeded to a full Needs Assessment and the current average is 60%, significantly reducing the number of children going through an EHCNA unnecessarily and avoiding the high costs of the assessment process.

Annual Reviews

Workstream Five looks at developing a strength based approach to Annual Reviews to maximise opportunities to celebrate young peoples' outcomes and nurture step-down to support needs through the graduated approach. This includes using the Valuing SEND Assessment Tool to review and track progress. Work is ongoing to review learning and how this can be replicated at scale. Once established we expect to see the following outcomes:

- Outcomes for young people are clearer and celebrated when they've been achieved.
- Greater focus on what children and young people *can* do rather than what they *can't* do.
- Children and young people are less dependent on adult support.

- Fewer children and young people feel *different* as a result of adult support in the classroom.
- The Local Authority ceases to maintain EHC Plans at the right time rather than at the end of the child's educational journey.

See Appendix C for Annual Review case studies.

Revolving Door – stepping down inappropriate support

Our vision is for all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to be supported to achieve the best possible outcomes in school and in life. Partners in education, health and social care are committed to work together to establish an integrated school system where children and young people get the right support in the right place, at the right time and are able to transition to adulthood and independence when they are ready to do so.

Phase 2 of the implementation plan is now underway and workstreams six and seven focus on providing a more flexible offer for families, away from a binary choice between special and mainstream provision. This will support the concept of a 'revolving door' enabling children and young people to transition back to a mainstream setting when they are academically able improving their long term outcomes.

- **Six: Support step-down with focus on transition from special to mainstream school**
- **Seven: Introduce safe base provision within mainstream**

Step down from Special School to Mainstream

Activity so far includes:-

- Development of a transitions protocol to ensure children, young people and families to always have a choice about their future. The protocol is sensitive to the challenges of transition and provides initiatives such as dual placement to provide families with the confidence they need.
- A multi-agency project board, chaired by Head of Inclusion has been established to drive forward the transitions work.
- Four children are making the move from special to mainstream school this term.
- A further nine children have been identified for whom a transition in the coming year would be appropriate.
- Case studies have been collected, highlighting positive outcomes and key learning (Appendix C).
- An evaluation session was attended by 21 key stakeholders to share experiences and learning about transition.
- Applied behavioural science and MINDSPACE training workshop was delivered to both the Pupil Reintegration Team and the SEND teams to develop skills and a greater focus on the strengths based approach.

Three historical case studies have been collected from young people living in Lincolnshire who had the opportunity to move from their specialist setting into a mainstream school. These three case studies can be used in communication with parents and carers, schools and the wider community to promote the benefits of transitions.

	<p>Emma is now 24 years old. She has cerebral palsy and moved to a mainstream school in year 7. When she left school she attended college and then went on to complete an internship at a nursing home, an apprenticeship at MENCAP in the finance department and is now co-chair of Lincolnshire Young Voices.</p>
	<p>Ben is now 17 years old. He has Asperger's syndrome and moved to his mainstream school in year 7. Ben achieved 6 high grade GCSEs and is now studying for A Levels in Physics, Maths and DT at a mainstream grammar school. He is hoping to study mechanical engineering at university.</p>
	<p>Luke has ASD. He moved from his special school to a mainstream school at 11 years old. He is now 15 and will take his GCSEs next year.</p>

When curating the historic case studies, views were collected from the children (now young adults), their families, schools and the pupil reintegration team. The case studies found improved outcomes for all three children who had transitioned to mainstream school as shown below.

Improved grades and educational attainments	A renewed enjoyment, enthusiasm and commitment to school	Developing greater empathy for others
Learning coping strategies for life	Developing strong and trusting relationships	Improved social integration; developing friendships
Improved concentration	Improved confidence and self esteem	Greater involvement in community-based activities

See Appendix D for current case studies.

Safe Base Provision within Mainstream settings

The aim of the Safe Base is to deliver high quality provision for pupils with SEND, removing any barriers thus allowing each pupil to continue to make good progress in order to meet their identified needs and outcomes.

In recent years there has been a marked increase in demand for specialist educational placements for pupils with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Communication and Interaction needs (C&I). The development of Safe Bases will enable provision to be made for pupils whose needs cannot be met without additional support and resource in mainstream schools/academies.

Robust safe base contract management will also ensure that a proportion of pupils move out of safe base and into mainstream full time, releasing safe base places for pupils coming through the system. The fact that the base is sited within the mainstream lends itself to the revolving door.

A number of mainstream schools/academies have shown interest in developing a Safe Base and work is currently ongoing to develop a proposal for the Children's Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) with clear commissioning arrangements. The aim is to introduce the first Safe Bases in secondary schools by January 2022. This will not only provide much needed additional capacity for specialist places but also increase options open to families.

Hold to account and mitigate system pressures through primed performance

The final workstream in the High Needs Transformation Programme is designed to set and monitor trajectory ambitions across High Needs and embed primed performance and a management approach from Team Managers to DLT. This workstream ensures a clear line of sight between strategic ambitions and decision-making ensuring that information-systems allow system pressures to be mitigated and stakeholders are robustly held to account.

As a result of the Transformation Programme, we are now able to access detailed reporting and identify spikes and trends to enable us to anticipate and respond to demands appropriately. Data is regularly discussed and debated from locality level to DLT so everyone has insight and is responsive to trends. Further analysis is ongoing to understand the increasing demand for EHC Needs Assessments and to develop strategies and interventions to mitigate this demand.

The Programme is acutely aware of the current financial pressures on the High Needs Budget and trajectory modelling continues to inform all of the transformation work and seek to achieve a financially sustainable SEND System.

Governance

The High Needs Transformation Programme, Risk Register and all workstreams are governed by the Children's Directorate Leadership Team through regular reporting from the High Needs Transformation Core Group and feedback from the Transformation Partnership. The partnership meets half termly to ensure full sector engagement and facilitate the co-production of programme strategies and delivery of our inclusive ambition. Financial implications are considered within each work stream when evaluating the options and recommended actions for decision.

2. Conclusion

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is requested to review and comment on the report.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Individual risks and issues logs are being captured and developed by the Transformation Team. All risks are monitored through robust governance arrangements via the Children's Directorate Leadership Team, Transformation Core Group and Transformation Partnership Board.

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	High Needs Strategy
Appendix B	High Needs Strategy Quick Read
Appendix C	Case Studies Annual Reviews
Appendix D	Case Studies Transitions

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Carrie Forrester who can be contacted on 07768 423460 or by e-mail at Carrie.Forrester@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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