

Special Education Needs and Disability Capital Investment Fund – 2020/2021

Priorities for investment

Proportionally, Swindon has a large number of specialist school places and a high percentage of EHCP's compared to other Local Authorities. Although there is growth in the Borough, the SEND Capital Fund will not provide an adequate budget to create new specialist provision. Therefore, given the breadth of provision that already exists and is planned for the future the Local Authority proposes that this investment fund should be focused on inclusion by providing better access and improvements to existing places.

The special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) strategies and emerging reviews have identified the areas where investment in creating new or improving existing provision would support the strategic commissioning aims of the Local Authority, Providers, Parents and Pupils.

Background

The Children and Families Act 2014 places important statutory responsibilities on local authorities for supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This is a vital role that local authorities retain in an increasingly school-led education system and one that requires long-term strategic planning, informed by detailed local knowledge enhanced through consultation with parents and carers, and good relationships with local schools. Local authorities must ensure there are sufficient good school places for all pupils, including those with SEND.

To support this responsibility on the 4th March 2017 the Department for Education (DfE) announced capital allocations specifically for capital investment in provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability. Swindon was allocated £977,620 over three years from April 2018 (£325,873 per year). In May 2018, the DfE announced a further share of £50m for SEND capital investment of which Swindon received £227,353 and then in December 2018, the DfE announced a further share of £100m for SEND capital investment of which Swindon received £454,707, giving a total of £1,659,680

Whilst the investment from central government is welcome, it is recognised that the level of funding allocated would not stretch to create, improve and update the provision for SEND required across the Borough.

Swindon has invested significantly in the provision exclusively for SEND by committing £11.6m since 2011 on a number of capital projects. In addition the Local Authority has supported the creation of a new secondary age Autistic Free School opening in September 2018. Therefore, in this context the SEND Capital Investment Fund from the DfE will only stretch to a number of smaller schemes to try and widen the reach of this investment.

The capital fund is to support local authorities to invest in provision for children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 to improve the quality and range of provision available to the local authority. It is intended for the children and young people with education, health and care plans for whom the local authority is responsible. It is entirely legitimate for the local authority to spend some of the capital funding on provision that happens to lie outside the local authority's boundaries, if the local authority places children and young people there and believes that the capital investment will improve the quality and range of provision available.

This funding can be invested in mainstream schools and academies, special units, special schools and academies, early years settings, further education colleges or to make other provision for children and young people aged from 0 to 25.

Local authorities can invest their share of the special provision capital fund in:

- Creating new (additional) places at good or outstanding provision
- Improving facilities or developing new facilities

This can be through:

- Expansion(s) to existing provision including at the same site or at a different site.
- Reconfiguring provision to make available the space for the additional places or facilities.
- Re-purposing areas so that they meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Other capital transactions that result in new (additional) places or facilities' improvements
- Investing in provision that is located in another local authority where this supports providing good outcomes for children in their area.

The DfE will require the Local Authority to complete and publish a short plan that sets out how they intend to invest their allocation, which is visible to parents, carers and other local groups. The plan for local authorities' SEND capital provision allocations should sit coherently with their wider plan. Local authorities are required to take the following steps to access their funding.

Before receiving the funding, local authorities need to:

- Consult with parents and carers of children with SEN and disabilities and young people with SEN and disabilities.
- Work with education providers to agree how the capital can best be targeted.
- Fill in the short plan template, confirming that the requirement to consult with parents, carers and young people has been met, and including information about the other groups that they have consulted.
- Publish a plan on their local offer page showing how they plan to invest their funding, before the deadline specified below.

In 2017 the Local Authority commissioned a High Needs Review to investigate value for money and recommendations for the how the High Needs funding block should be prioritised. The review has been used to inform this SEND Capital Investment Strategy.

In addition the Local Authority has also produced a SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which investigates Swindon's changing population, the factors that affect education, health and wellbeing and the implications for future services that are vital in setting priorities and planning future services to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The SEND Performance Improvement Plan and the SEND Joint Action Plan have also been used to inform this SEND Capital Investment Strategy.

Swindon CCG has become a trailblazer site for the roll out of the Green Paper Mental Health Support Teams in Schools.

Phase 1 – 18/19 funding bids

The Borough received a good response of 19 bids in total. Within these bids there were a lot of nurture/sensory rooms and well-being spaces, a greenhouse and purchase of laptops. 13 of

the bids were approved and 6 bids were declined. Taking into account the 13 successful bids the total amount of Capital investment funding comes to a total of £279,811.69 with the schools contributing a further 25%.

Phase 2- 19/20 funding Bids

The Borough received an outstanding 48 bids in total. Schools have gained sensory rooms, Sheppard's huts, hoists, outdoor learning areas to well-being centres. 25 of the bids were approved. Taking into account the successful bids the total amount of Capital investment funding comes to a total of £490,162.78 with the schools contributing a further 25%.

Allocation of funding

SEND Capital Investment Funding allocation	£1,659, 680
Total expenditure spent on projects (Phase 1 &2)	£793,653
Remaining allocation	£866,027

How funding will be allocated for Phase 3

Swindon has a higher than national average of students with EHCP's at 3.9% (National- 3.1%) and the high needs budget is currently over spent by approximately £1.9m and overall DSG overspend is £1.8m and is likely to need a deficit recovery plan to manage the budget. The number of specialist school placements required each academic year is increasing nationally and locally there is a pressure of at least 100 special school and SRP placements in primary and secondary schools for the academic year 2020-21. The draft SEND strategy supports the national drive for inclusion within mainstream provision to meet the needs of children with SEND. The SENACT team and wider stakeholders have been consulting on how we can work together to support the strategy. By implementing a series of initiatives, such as special school outreach and improving the facilities through the capital bid funds to support this we aim to do things differently to improve outcomes for children in Swindon with SEND.

Following this it is proposed that

- £570K of the SEND Capital Investment grant to fund 13 pods to support pupils with SEND this includes a £50K allocation for variations to the 2 PFI schools.
- £50K – September 2020 adaptations & equipment (LA retained funding)
- The remaining £246,027 will be available to bid for as with the previous phases match funding scheme – focusing on ASC friendly sensory & therapeutic spaces in primary provision as well as all the other criteria as in previous years.

It is proposed to set a maximum of £100,000, in addition the projects will be match funded by the provider of 25%. The minimum match funding requirement is £1000. Funding will be allocated to projects in criteria order until the funding limit has been reached. The bid will be scored against the following criteria (out of 100 points), which are linked to the priorities:

- Primary aged projects that can promote an ASD friendly classroom or whole school approach through adaptations to the school environment, this can include the creation of quiet spaces however priority will be given to those bids that demonstrate integration. (30 points)

Appendix 1

- Social Emotional and Mental Health by promoting inclusion in mainstream resulting in a reduction of fixed term exclusions and increased attendance levels, for example a nurture provision (20 points).
- Physical Disability by promoting inclusion so the needs of pupils with physical disabilities can be met, for example, lifts, ramps or any building adjustments (20 points).
- Projects that promote greater inclusion of students with Education Health and Care Plans into mainstream school settings (10 points).
- Early intervention with aim to either strengthening earlier interventions on the graduated response and/or improve attainment and progress outcomes (5 points)
- Showing a link to enable strong links to be built with the new mental health support team available to schools as part of the trailblazer pilot (5 points)
- Supporting evidence of the proposal and its potential to support future careers, apprenticeships and life skills (5 points)
- Supporting evidence of the proposal in the form of plans and/or quotes to support the allocation of funding and proof of deliverability (5 points)

Supporting evidence of the proposal and its potential to support future careers, apprenticeships and life skills The criteria should not put off applications for the capital fund as allocations will be based on the level of funding available, in addition applications will enable the Local Authority to collect information on provision required for SEND investment to inform potential future allocations.

Academies (who have a lease) carrying out works will need to refer to their Lease and apply for a Licence to Alter from Property Assets (if appropriate) before undertaking any works, the costs for undertaking the administration works for the Licence is charged to the Academy.

Maintained schools carrying out works will need to complete a Proposed Alterations form before undertaking any works.

Timescale and decision making

Bids were originally going to be invited from providers between 6th April 2020 and 1st May 2020 in order to try and approve some schemes required for the September 2020 intake. However, due to Covid-19 this bidding window has had to be delayed and bids will now be invited from providers between 1st September 2020 to the 2nd October 2020. However, remaining funding can be allocated outside of this initial bidding window on a rolling basis and additional windows will be communicated to education providers when available.

Bids will be scored against the criteria and considered by a SEND Capital Panel. It is proposed that the Panel will include representatives from Education, Health and Social Care. The Local Authority will also request parental representation through the Families Voice service.

The final allocation of funding and the decision on all schemes will be approved by the Director of Children Service's delegated authority and then published on the Local Offer website. Legal advisors will be instructed to enter into contract before the release of funding.