

Alternative Provision and Exclusions Report

Schools Forum

Date: 3rd October 2017

Author: Head of Education
Wards: All wards
Locality Affected: All locality areas
Parishes Affected: All parish areas

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The report aims to update schools forum on changes to the funding of EOTAS and the Tuition service and the impact this could have on the High Needs Block funding. It will also provide an update on the alternative provision working group which includes the consideration of introducing a charge for permanently excluding pupils.
- 1.2 Exclusions both fixed term, permanent and withdrawn exclusions continue to increase. This is putting a pressure on alternative provision capacity and EOTAS, and the high needs budget and does not fit with the aims of Swindon Challenge.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to note the report and that further recommendations will come back to the Schools Forum in December.

Detail

- 2.1 A report came to Schools Forum in 2016 which highlighted weaknesses in provision in the Tuition service. The recommendation agreed was that the Tuition service would move into EOTAS. This is now taking place with a transition process in place from September 2017 until April 2018. This is to allow time to address financial, staffing and accommodation matters.
- 2.2 The Tuition service has previously been allocated a fixed budget and this has been expected to meet the needs of any pupil that is allocated to it or the service has responsibility for. This has meant that it has been very difficult to offer full-time timetables pupils due to the potential cost of the provision required. Part-time timetables for pupils are only expected to be used in exceptional circumstances. One of the issues being addressed is to ensure that each part of EOTAS has a fixed number of pupils (with some flexibility) and that if this number is exceeded, then further funding would be required from the High Needs block to meet a pupil's needs. This aspect of alternative provision is part of the agenda of the alternative provision working group. This is because there may be funding pressures in other parts of the High Needs block if funding is increased for alternative provision.
- 2.3 An Alternative Provision consultation took place in terms 5 and 6 in 2017 with schools and alternative provision providers. This has led to the formation of an

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Contact Person, Direct Dial Telephone Number, Employee@swindon.gov.uk.

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alternative provision working group. The working group consists of Headteacher Associations, Alternative Providers and Swindon Borough Council Officers. Between September and December 2017 the working group will meet to determine and agree next steps to deliver the outcomes agreed in the consultation, (see Appendix One).

2.4 The key aims of the working group are to:

- Reduce the rate of fixed term and permanent exclusions for children in Swindon to below the national average.
- Increase the number of Alternative Provision re-integrations.
- Reduce the percentage of children who attend more than one secondary school between Years 7-11.

One of the options being considered is to introduce a charge for permanently excluding a pupil to better meet the actual costs of educating a pupil in alternative provision. The actual cost is estimated at being between £18,000 and £20,000 per year. The aim of introducing a charge is to encourage schools to consider other strategies as well as alternative provision to meet a pupil's needs rather than exclusion. The Oakfield project currently offers places at between £10,000 to £12,000 per year but if a school decides to permanently exclude, the costs are significantly less to the excluding school. Introducing a charge for permanent exclusions would need the approval of schools forum. The charging system would need to have safeguards built into it as pupils sometimes move schools to avoid exclusion but are then excluded within a short time at the new school. Part of the process is likely to be for exclusion charging to be discussed at the Fair Access Panel.

The Oakfield project also faces considerable financial challenges and an option to address this would be to provide funding from the High Needs Block for places at the project. Funding alternative provision for alternative provision takes place in other local authorities such as Bristol.

2.5 Two Secondary Headteachers from Bristol presented the Bristol Protocol to SASH for joint management of placements via Fair Access Protocol and Shared Funding for School Exclusions. This was well received by headteachers although it was noted that Bristol schools are much better funded than Swindon. Furthermore in Bristol much alternative provision is funded through the High Needs block.

3. Alternative Options

3.1 The alternative option is to maintain the status quo which has the risk of exclusions continuing to rise.

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4. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

- 4.1 There is a risk of pressure re High Needs budget as all Alternative Provision will be place funded going forward. The working party will be exploring options re mitigating this financial risk and the educational risks of increasing exclusions.

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 4.2 Without a reduction in the number of exclusions the high needs budget will be at risk. Under a place funded model, exclusions exceed the number of places currently funded in EOTAS and Nylands. Historically the Tuition Service was grant funded and its capacity stretched to meet demand. This resulted in a significant number of part time Alternative Provision placements.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 4.3 None.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 4.4 None.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 4.5 None.

Risk Management

- 4.6 None.

5. Consultees

- 5.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 Alternative Provision Review.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Alternative Provision working party plan.