

SEN forecasting and modelling

Wards All

Service: Access Service

Portfolio: Councillor Statham

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to provide the Education Scrutiny and Overview Committee with an update on:

- SEN forecasting and modelling of future demands for specialist school places

2. Recommendations

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this report and decides whether any further information or updates are required

3. Report detail

At its meeting on 28 November 2022, the Education Overview and Scrutiny meeting discussed an overview of school place planning on early years, primary, secondary, post 16 and SEN and how the Council meets its statutory responsibilities to ensure that there are available, in its area, sufficient schools 'in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education'

The report outlined that a detailed analysis had been undertaken for SEN modelling and as part of this commission's workplan, an update on the modelling had been programmed for this meeting.

The forecasting model:

In order to predict the number of SEN Specialist places that would be required over the next five years, a model needed to be developed which could assess demand and determine the current gaps in provision. Traditionally, SEN place planning is undertaken on a similar basis to mainstream school place planning using a combination of population data and school census data. However there are a number of issues with this when it comes to planning for placements in relation to SEND Need including:

- Changes in population do not align with changes to SEND demand. In Walsall overall, the predicted child population is set to remain relatively stable or even

decline slightly over the coming years, whereas the number of children with identified SEND is increasing.

- School census data does not address specific needs within the local area. It does not sufficiently account for children who are placed in Walsall schools but live out of borough, or the number and proportion of Walsall children who require a specialist place but need to be placed out of borough due to there not being enough of or the right type of placements to meet their needs.
- Equally school census data is not robust or sufficiently detailed enough to account for the changing needs of children with SEND who require specialist places.

With these challenges in mind, we set out to develop a new SEND model using local EHCP data which could be used to develop the detail around placement requirements and also take into account local developments and priorities for SEND including ensuring that there were sufficient placements to meet changing needs and reducing the amount of children needing to be placed out of borough and taking account of the plans to ensure that the needs of more children could be met within mainstream settings with the right additional support.

The model was built on the following basis:

It took requests for EHCP assessments over the previous five years and analysed:

- What proportion of these resulted in an EHC plan being issued
- What proportion of children with an EHC plan required a special school place either as a first placement or a subsequent placement
- What types of needs children with EHC plans who required special school places had

Using this data, a number of different scenarios were modelled which enabled a prediction to be made about the number of new places that would be required over the next five years. This included:

- By 2025, 1,069 special school places would be required
- The majority of these places (60%) would be needed for children with primary needs of Communication and Interaction or Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- There was likely to be a shift to more places initially being required at the Early Years and primary stages as identification of SEND was happening earlier.

This was caveated on the basis that the model would need to be refined after year one, following an assessment of its accuracy. Other factors which could potentially have an impact on the model included the ongoing impact on demand for SEND support and EHCPs post-Covid and how local development of SEND services to provide the right support earlier and implement a graduated response to need was impacting on demand for higher level services and specialist places.

While there have been differences in changing demand around requests for EHCPs that were not predicted (with numbers increasing faster than was initially thought), the predictions around the number of specialist placements required have been surprisingly accurate in the first year. However, the increased demand will have an impact on the required specialist school places, meaning that the

predicted number for 2025 is likely to increase as the model is re-worked to take this into account.

We have demonstrated and talked about the model we have developed in a number of forums, including regional education groups and in meetings with the DfE. Our approach has been deemed to be robust and innovative and a number of LAs and the DfE have asked to have further conversations to understand the work. We have also been asked to present the model at a national education conference in June.

Next steps

- The model is currently in the process of being refined based on the actual numbers of EHCPs and children who required specialist places in 2022 and the increase in demand for EHC assessments.
- The updated results will be used to assess and assure the plans currently in place to address SEND Placement Sufficiency.
- We are continuing to talk to other LAs about the model and share the development and lessons learned from our development
- We will present the model at the national education conference in June

Update on additional places

At its meeting on 14 December 2022, Cabinet approved capital funding for additional SEN places as follows:

- £2,480,000 for the creation of 124 places at Specialist Resourced Provisions (SRPs) at mainstream schools
- £1,140,000 for the creation of 140 additional places with the Education Development Centre (EDC) as part of Oakwood School by creating a satellite provision
- £500,000 for the development of feasibilities for permanent expansions of our existing special schools across the borough

A number of mainstream schools have already started to provide provision for EHCP pupils in SRPs including New Invention Infant School, Christchurch Primary School and Short Heath Junior School. Additional schools are planning to offer SRPs from September 2023.

The first part of the development at the EDC is at design and procurement stage and is scheduled to be complete in time for September 2023.

The feasibilities for permanent expansions at our special schools is in progress and the outcome and options the feasibilities present will be subject to a further Cabinet report.

4. *Financial information*

Any capital costs arising from works required will be funded from DfE grant funding – either Basic Need for mainstream schools or High Needs Provision Capital Allocation for special schools.

5. *Reducing Inequalities*

It is of crucial importance to the Council's strategic objectives that the young People of Walsall can access the right provision to meet their need to achieve the appropriate qualifications, progressing to employment and / or training and to make a positive contribution within the Borough in the future.

6. Decide

The Committee may decide to note the current position and request further information or assurance if necessary.

7. Respond

Any recommendations made by the Committee will be assessed against the Access and Inclusion planned work and performance board programmes.

8. Review

The work of the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team is subject to constant monitoring and assessment via the Children's Services Performance Board process.

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