

Schools Funding Forum 18th June 2015

ADDITIONALLY RESOURCED PROVISION IN HAVERING

:

AN UPDATE AND PROPOSAL

FOR

APPROVAL BY SCHOOLS FORUM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2015, the LA tabled a report at a meeting of the Schools Forum, outlining its strategy to deal with the increasing shortages of places for Children and Young People in Havering, particularly those with An Autistic Spectrum Disorder or with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. This report has been prepared as an update to the Schools Forum on the action the LA has taken so far, including a proposal on the next steps. It seeks approval for a planned and systematic increase in the number of Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) for both types of needs, having identified these as priorities.

ACTION TAKEN

Following consultation at the Schools Forum in April, the LA has started a programme of visits and consultations with ARP, mainstream, special school and LA staff so that it may agree the next steps on how to increase provision for Children and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, in addition to those with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties in the borough. It has identified these two types of needs as priorities for action, recognising that failure to address the existing shortages will place unacceptable pressure on schools and other providers in making provision for Children and Young People with special educational needs.

The LA is consulting on a systematic review of its existing ARP and has also started discussions with its special schools on how capacity for these two groups of Children and Young People can be increased, including parental confidence in the system. It wrote to all its schools in May to start the consultation process on the setting up of new ARPs, providing the rationale and seeking responses on the next steps. It also sought expressions of interest for hosting or supporting the development of new ARPs. In the meantime, the LA has continued to monitor the levels of demand so that it may predict the provision that it will require in the future in order to meet the needs of Children and Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties. All the indications are that the increases being witnessed by schools continue unabated. These increases are consistent across the borough for both groups, placing pressure on schools to provide for both types of needs within their resources. This is not sustainable so that there will be need for increased provision within the borough in order to avoid making further, costly placements in the independent and non-maintained sector. These placements are not economic nor are they sustainable. It is estimated that, on average, they are likely to cost between £10-25k more than similar placements in an ARP, hence the need to increase capacity in this area.

CURRENT SHORTFALLS IN ADDITIONALLY RESOURCED PROVISION

The LA currently makes additionally resourced provision for Children and Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the RJ Mitchell School in Hornchurch (South East) for primary aged pupils and at Hall Mead in Upminster (North East) for those at the secondary stage of their education. Hilldene Primary is its only resource for Children and Young People with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties in Noaks Hill (North West). However, over the past few years, there have been large increases in the numbers of pupils identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder. These have been accompanied with similar increases in the number of pupils presenting with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties in schools, in addition to those subject to disciplinary exclusions.

The LA is therefore experiencing shortfalls in both types of provision and is intending to deal with these as matters of priority. It is intending to create additional places for each type of need as follows

September 2015-July 2016

- An additional 20 places for Children and Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorder through the creation of 1 ARP (Primary) and 1 ARP (Secondary), with 10 places in each, preferably based in the North West/West.
- An additional 20 places for Children and Young People with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties through the creation of 1 ARP (Primary), with 10 places in the South East/East, and 1 ARP (Secondary), possibly in the South East/East to link in with its primary equivalent or alternatively in the North West to link in with Hilldene.

It estimates a need of a further additional 40 places in 2016-17, with a further 20 places in 2017-18 though this will need to be kept under review, taking account of both the known growths in population and other developments.

PROPOSED STRATEGY

The LA is proposing a two pronged approach in order to support schools to provide for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties.

1. To increase capacity in a range of mainstream schools so that they may develop into “autism friendly” or “behaviour confident” schools through additional funding, training and support, and
2. To increase the number of places for both types of need through the creation of new ARPs and a partnership approach with special schools whereby capacity may be created through exchange/interchange of pupils with other providers.

The rationale for both of these approaches lies in their evidence base. ARPs are well established and serve in many areas of the country to increase Local Authorities’ capacity to provide for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The development of “more friendly and confident” schools is more recent and is proving to be a way in which schools can be helped to develop and consolidate on an area of interest/experience so that they may develop more skills and expertise in dealing with pupils with a particular type of need. When grouped together within a “friendly school” project within a LA, this can help increase both capacity and confidence in the area.

Autism Friendly/Behaviour Confident Schools

The LA recognises the inclusive practice of its schools which has led to the successful inclusion of pupils with a range of SEN and disabilities. It also recognises that many schools already provide for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), mostly within their own resources. It now wishes to support these schools further through a stepped approach, leading to a special recognition of their work so that they may be identified as schools with best practice in these areas. It believes that such schools should be supported with some additional funding and training so that they may serve as “autism-friendly or behaviour-confident schools”. Each school will receive specialist training, including at least one visit per week (initially) from a specialist, commissioned and funded by the LA so that they may develop an Autism Spectrum Disorder or SEBD specialism or both. In return, schools will be expected to nominate and allocate key staff for this purpose whilst also investing matched funding to help them support their own pupils.

The LA proposes to support 6-8 schools to work towards the status of “Autism- friendly or Behaviour-confident School” in the first instance, over a period of 3 years. The cost to the LA will be the equivalent of 1 ARP place per school, i.e. around £10k p.a. and around £60-80k p.a. in total.

The aim is to increase capacity in these mainstream schools so that they may become even more skilled and confident in supporting pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties. The LA envisages the following continuum.

Mainstream Schools → Mainstream “Friendly Schools” → Mainstream ARPs → Special Schools

New ARPs

The LA proposes to establish a number of new ARPs over the next 3 years in order to deal with its expanding population and the pressures from increased incidences of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties. It proposes to set up 4 new ARPs per year, with 12 commissioned places in each, at a cost of around £120k each, i.e. a total of £480k p.a. These will be for Children and Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and will be for the ages of 3-19. They will be either hosted and operated by a mainstream school, or be set up as a satellite unit operated by a special school or through any other formally agreed partnership agreement. All will be governed by the terms and conditions defined in LA Service Level Agreement that will apply across the borough.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

The LA seeks approval to fund 40 places in 4 new ARPs to be set up, at a cost of £400k p.a., within this financial year, 2015-March 31, 2016. It is also seeking approval to support 6-8 schools to work towards “autism- friendly or behaviour-confident schools” at a cost of £60-80k p.a.

The LA is therefore proposing to commit a total of up to £480k p.a. to secure the implementation of its above strategy. However, this would be cost-neutral given that approximately £180k has been identified as a saving arising from the re-configuration of existing ARPs which would be re-allocated to support the new portfolio of support provision; £200k has been set aside for ASD developments in the current financial year; and a further £100k has also been identified for new SEBD provision. From an LA perspective we can see no alternative as it is clear that without this investment, it will not be able to avoid making similar, if not much greater expenditure, on out-borough placements. Given

the urgency to deal with the imminent shortage of places for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties as early as September 2016, it is seeking to expedite its consultation so that new provision can be planned for next term, with the “friendly schools initiative” likely to start sooner, given the expected level of interest.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the LA is given approval to implement its strategy to increasing capacity and building confidence in the borough through established, evidence based approaches. The funding requested is essentially an investment and a means to avoid expenditure being made on out-borough placements due to lack of local provision.

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10 June 2015.