

Report of the Strategic Director of Services for Children and Young People to the meeting of the Executive to be held on

CN

Subject:

Bradford Special Schools Reorganisation - Specialist Provision for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Pupils

Summary statement:

This report presents the outcomes of consultation on proposals to establish Additionally Resourced Centres (ARCs) as specialist provision for deaf and hearing impaired pupils and on proposals to establish a Deaf and Hearing Impaired Service to staff this provision and seeks Executive approval to implement the changes.

NB the Consultation Report, Appendix 2 is to follow

Kath Tunstall, Strategic Director of Services to Children and Young People

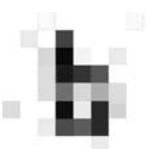
Portfolio:

Children and Young People

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Improvement Area:

Young People and Education



2006-2007
Improving Rural Services
Empowering Communities



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Suzan Hemingway, Assistant Director Corporate Services (City Solicitor)



1. Summary

- 1.1. This report presents the outcomes of consultation on proposals to establish Additionally Resourced Centres (ARCs) as specialist provision for deaf and hearing impaired pupils and on proposals to establish a Deaf and Hearing Impaired Service to staff this provision and seeks Executive approval to implement the changes.
- 1.2. In October 2005, following statutory consultation, the Executive agreed to close Thorn Park School for Deaf Children and the Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) at Nab Wood School, and to reduce the number of places at Girlington Primary School DSP from 30 to 20. In their place the Executive approved the establishment of provision that would combine DSPs and “Deaf Centres of Excellence” (DCEs), as set out below, and authorised the then Director of Education and Life Skills to approve the governance and structural arrangements of the DCEs and associated provision and to take all necessary action to implement the proposals.
- 1.3. Ongoing work was subsequently undertaken, resulting in the proposal to merge the concepts of DSP and DCE into unified provision to be known as ARCs (Additionally Resourced Centres). The ARCs would be staffed through the establishment of a Council-employed Deaf and Hearing Impaired Service, as described in the document “Towards Enhanced Provision”. Having reviewed the consultation and development work undertaken on the organisation and management of the ARCs, the Strategic Director of Services to Children and Young People took the decision under delegated powers to consult on the revised proposals.

2. Background

- 2.1. The provision approved in 2005 by the Executive to replace Thorn Park School for Deaf Children and Nab Wood DSP (Designated Specialist Provision) following their closure comprised:
 - Primary DCE (50 places 2-11) at Swain House Primary School
 - Primary DSP (15 places 3-11) at Swain House Primary School
 - Primary DSP (20 places down from 30; 3-11) at Girlington Primary School
 - Primary DSP (15 places 3-11) at a primary school to be identified
 - Secondary DCE (50 places 11-19) at Hanson School
 - Secondary DSP at (15 places) Hanson School
- 2.2. In March 2007, Education Bradford presented a Progress Report to the Education Policy Partnership (EPP), which reported that representatives from Thorn Park, Nab Wood, Hanson, Swain House and Girlington Schools, EB and the Council had met to discuss the model of provision. They had concluded that there was no significant difference between a DCE and a DSP and had recommended the merger of the concepts of DSP and DCE into unified provision. This unified provision now known as Additionally Resourced Centres (ARCs), would provide a total of 65 places at each of the Hanson and Swain House School sites, being the same number of places on those sites agreed by the Council’s Executive previously under the DSP/DCE model.
- 2.3. The Report to EPP also recommended that the preferred model would be best delivered through the development of a Deaf and Hearing Impaired Service, which would staff the ARCs at Swain House Primary, Girlington Primary and Hanson Schools. This service would be responsive to changing pupil need, and would

therefore deliver efficient use of resources, value for money and improved continuing professional development for staff. Following further development work undertaken on the organisation and Management of the ARCs, the Strategic Director of Services to Children and Young People took the decision under delegated powers to consult on the proposals as described in the March 2007 report to the EPP.

- 2.4. The outcomes of the consultation are contained in the attached consultation report (Appendix 2) and the key issues raised are identified at paragraph 3 below. It is now proposed that the ARCs be established and that a Council-employed Deaf and Hearing Impaired Service as described in the document "Towards Enhanced Provision" be established which would staff all the ARCs. The Head of Service would be line managed by Education Bradford, and would work in partnership with Education Bradford to ensure that the ARCs deliver a service that complements the work of Education Bradford's Support Team for Deaf Children in order to deliver a cohesive continuum of provision.
- 2.5. It is considered that the proposed provision and service staffing arrangements would improve the standard, quality and range of educational provision for deaf and hearing impaired children and young people by both extending the breadth of curriculum accessible to them and improving social opportunities and access to extended services. It is considered that the revised arrangements meet the requirements of the SEN Improvement Test (see Appendix 1). The Service for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children would provide a continuum of provision, access to the full range of trained and qualified staff and access as appropriate to the full mainstream curriculum and personalised learning.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. The revised proposals have been the subject of consultation that took place with all potentially affected stakeholders between 10th November 2008 and 16th January 2009. The consultation set out the plans for Additionally Resourced Centres (ARCs) that would be part of the mainstream school and would be staffed by specialist staff employed by the Deaf and Hearing Impaired Service. British Sign Language (BSL) and Sign Supported English (SSE) and/or an oral/aural approach to communication would be provided for each deaf and hearing impaired pupil, as appropriate.
- 3.2. The consultation did not cover existing support from Education Bradford's Support Team for Deaf Children. This provision delivers a different aspect of the continuum of provision and is made under the Education Bradford contract. Clear links would be established to facilitate partnership working across the range of provision and services for all deaf and hearing impaired children.
- 3.3. An extension to the consultation enabled meetings cancelled as a result of severe weather to be rescheduled and enabled further consultation meetings to be held on the sites where provision will be closing (Thorn Park and Nab Wood). A great deal of detailed discussion took place during these meetings, as set out in the consultation report. This detail will be taken into account in the development of closure and transition plans, as well as the long term plans. The key issues raised by stakeholders are summarised below.

3.4. Key issues raised during the consultation.

- The vast majority of respondents (both through the dialogue in meetings and written responses) are in favour of the proposals. Detail is set out in the consultation report at Appendix 2.
- Certain key issues and areas of concern emerged during the consultation, relating to:
 - Governance arrangements and accountability
 - Staffing structures and clarification of HR processes
 - Resourcing generally, and staff skill levels in particular
 - Proposed numbers in the DSPs
 - Transitional arrangements, including transport and impact on siblings
 - Early years provision
 - The ongoing need for representation of the deaf community, and the place for this within governance arrangements
 - The operational relationship between the proposed service and the Education Bradford Support Team for Deaf Children.
- None of these issues is a barrier to development of the provision. Subject to approval to proceed being given, the next requirement would be the development of an action plan to address these issues and all other actions necessary to establish the provision. An action plan would be approved and monitored by the Assistant Director, Learning Services, accountable to the Strategic Director of Services to Children and Young People.

4. Matters for Consideration

- 4.1. The 2005 proposal proposed that the 50 place DCE provision at Swain House would cater for 2 – 11 year olds. Since then the Children’s Centre and Children’s Centre Plus programme has developed and it is now proposed that specialist early years provision will be developed at Children’s Centres Plus in the Gillington and Swain House catchment areas and formal links will be established between those Centres and the ARCs.
- 4.2. The 2005 proposal to establish primary provision in the north of the District was not pursued in the 2007 report to the EPP and subsequent advice from Education Bradford indicates that pupil numbers in the north of the District do not now warrant such provision being established. Current figures indicate that there are 7 children under 5 in the North of the district with hearing loss in this category, and current placement trends suggest that the parents of some of them would want their children to be educated in mainstream with appropriate support.
- 4.3. Under the revised proposals, the previous decision to determine a site for a new primary DSP in the North of the district is not required to be actioned at this point in time. The ongoing review of need and provision across the district and the delivery of an effective continuum of provision will become the responsibility of the Head of Service, in collaboration with Education Bradford and partner agencies.
- 4.4. The October 2005 report to Executive recognised that the proposed numbers for the DCE/DSPs included all pupils in the projection, whilst also recognising that “numbers may reduce as some parents may express a preference for mainstream

provision" (Document AO, Appendix 2, 17 October 2005). It is proposed that further work be undertaken as a matter of urgency to review the number of places required in the primary ARCs, as the numbers currently attending primary provision at Thorn Park School have fallen below the level that was predicted in 2005. There is a potential impact on design development (and therefore best use of resources) for the provisions at Swain House and Girlington. Should any adjustments to the capacity of the provisions prove necessary, it is recommended that all such further decisions should be taken by the Strategic Director of Services to Children and Young People under delegated powers, along with any other decision or action necessary to implement the new arrangements.

- 4.5. The primary and secondary build programmes will not be completed at the same time. The closure plan proposed in the consultation would require secondary age children to remain on the Thorn Park site, as an annex to Hanson School, for the period between the new primary and secondary provisions being available. It would also require detailed discussions to take place with the parents of children attending Nab Wood DSP, which would be conducted through the Annual Review process. It is recommended that the Strategic Director of Services to Children and Young People be specifically authorised to make any adjustments to the interim arrangements should that prove necessary
- 4.6. During the consultation staff were informed that preliminary work had been undertaken to develop an outline staffing model for the proposed Service. The process that would be put in place to enable staff at the existing provisions to transfer to the new Service would be agreed in consultation with Trade Union representatives, subject to Council approval being given to proceed. All staff affected are Council employees, and would continue to be so under the new Service Model. Staff response was generally positive, (further detail is supplied in the consultation report), and they were keen to discuss what opportunities would arise as a result of the increased flexibility.

Where staff raised issues and concerns that would need to be dealt with through OJC (Officers' Joint Committee) arrangements, it was agreed that those concerns would be summarised and brought forward to the meeting, along with the consultation report.

5. Options

- 5.1. Option 1: That revised plans for the provision described in this document are considered to be a further development of the DSP and DCE model which will deliver a unified provision, that is sufficiently flexible way to meet the current and future needs of deaf and hearing impaired pupils who require specialist provisions.
- 5.2. Option 2: That the original model of separate DSP and DCE be retained.
- 5.3. Option 1 is the favoured model for the reasons set out in the report. The revised proposals are based on the views of the key stakeholders. A decision to proceed on this basis would enable the Council to implement its previous decision to close Thorn Park School and Nab Wood School DSP. Option 2 would not, now, be the best model for meeting the needs of this group of students and would necessitate complex governance arrangements that could impede coherent service delivery.

6. Financial and Resource Appraisal

- 6.1. The delegated revenue funding for the new provision and any interim arrangements will be funded from the existing funds delegated to Thorn Park School, Nab Wood DSP and Girlington DSP, which is sufficient to provide the necessary revenue to establish the service.
- 6.2. BSF financing has been secured for the work on the Hanson site. The school's governing body will receive AWPU funding for the deaf and hearing impaired students on roll at Hanson, and will be required to contribute 10% of the total AWPU funding received towards the unitary charge payment.
- 6.3. Capital monies have been secured for building works at Swain House and Girlington Primary Schools through the Primary Capital Programme Pilot £1.1m and the Schools Access Initiative Funding £0.39m.

7. Legal Appraisal

- 7.1. Addition of specialist SEN provision is a prescribed alteration to the mainstream school, which requires the publication of statutory notices. Before that can take place statutory consultation on the proposed provision needs to take place with those likely to be affected by the proposals in accordance with the DCSF statutory guidance. The responses to that consultation must be considered in then deciding whether to publish the statutory notices necessary to proceed to implement the proposals. Consultation has already taken place prior to the Executive's earlier decision to close Thorn Park School and the Nab Wood DSP Provision, and no change is being proposed to that decision. The Authority considers that the requirements of the Improvement Test are met.
- 7.2. If Executive approval is given to publish notices on the revised proposals (ARCs) then statutory notices would be published, along with the closure notices for Thorn Park School and the Nab Wood DSP provision once a decision has been made on the number of places required at the ARCs...
- 7.3. When planning changes to existing SEN provision the Authority has to meet the SEN Improvement Test and be able to demonstrate that the proposed arrangements are likely to lead to improvement in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for children with special educational needs.

8. Equal Rights Implications

The inclusion strategy for the children and young people in the district is articulated in the document "Presence, Participation and Achievement", which was launched in 2004 and since its development has been kept under regular review. The strategy is linked to corporate priorities via the Children's Plan and the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The core aim of the inclusion strategy is "to promote the presence, participation and achievement of all children and young people". The key ambition within the strategy that is particularly relevant to this report is Bradford's commitment to develop a local continuum of provision for all children and young people

The proposed new provisions will cater specifically for deaf and hearing impaired pupils, and will contribute to the continuum of provision.

9. Sustainability Implications

Environmental sustainability: sustainability targets for reduction in carbon footprint are a prerequisite of the BSF programme.

10. Community Safety Implications

The BSF programme conforms to “secure by design” standards.

11. Human Rights Act

The Convention provides that no person shall be denied the right to education and that parental religious and philosophical convictions must be respect, subject to the provision of efficient instruction and avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.

12. Trade Union

Unions representing all staff affected have been consulted about the proposed developments as outlined above and will continue to be involved in discussions to develop the model and deliver staff assimilation arrangements.

13. Not for publication documents

None

14. Recommendations

14.1. That Executive approves the establishment of Additionally Resourced Centres (ARCs) to be staffed by the new Deaf and Hearing Impaired Service as the new arrangements for specialist provision for deaf and hearing impaired pupils to take effect from September 2010.

14.2. That Executive authorises the Strategic Director of Services to Children and Young People to take any actions and decisions necessary to implement the changes including the publication of all the necessary statutory notices to effect the changes, the implementation of closure plans for Thorn Park School and the DSP provision at Nab Wood, and any necessary revisions to the capacity of the ARCs.

15. Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft SEN Improvement Test

Appendix 2: Report on the consultation on the proposal for the establishment of a Service for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Pupils to be delivered at Additionally Resourced Centres (ARCs).

16. Background Documents

A. Documents available through the following web-link:

http://www.bradford.gov.uk/education_and_skills/schools/consultations_on_education/Deaf_and_Hearing_Impaired_Provision.htm

Report to the Director of Services to Children and Young People, 05.11.2008,
and appendices:

Appendix 1 Education Bradford report to EPP, 15.03.07

Appendix 2 Minutes of the meeting of the EPP, 15.03.07

Appendix 3 Education Bradford paper "Towards Enhanced Provision"

Appendix 4 Draft SEN Improvement Test

Appendix 5: Deaf and Hearing Impaired Service

B. Documents available by request from report contact (Kay Bottomley)

Report to EPP: Review of deaf and hearing impaired provision progress report, 23
February 2005

Report to EPP: SEN phase 3 consultation outcome – deaf provision, 22 September 2005

Report to Council Executive, October 2005

Council Executive decision, October 2005