WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST

WORCESTERSHIRE SPECIALIST PROVISION REPORT 2021

CONTENTS

Introduction 2

1. Special school places for children with cognition and learning difficulties..... 5

Current Provision..... 5

What do we know about need in Worcestershire?..... 6

Opportunities/proposals 7

2. Special school places for children with social emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) 8

Current Provision..... 8

What do we know about need in Worcestershire?..... 10

Opportunities/proposals 10

3. Post 16 11

Current Provision..... 11

What do we know about need in WORCESTERSHIRE? 13

Opportunities/proposals 13

4. Autism..... 14

Current Provision..... 14

What do we know about need in Worcestershire?..... 15

Opportunities/proposals 16

5. Residential educational Placements at Vale of evesham and Wyre forest schools .. 17

Current Provision..... 17

What do we know about need in Worcestershire?..... 19

Opportunites/proposals 19

6. Sensory Impairment (SI) 21

Current Provision..... 21

What do we know about need in Worcestershire..... 23

Opportunities/proposals 24

INTRODUCTION

This report sets out proposals for how we can make provision locally to meet the needs of more of our SEND learners with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), without the need to use costly independent, often out of county, placements. investment in local provision will both improve outcomes for and the experiences of our children and young people but also avoid unnecessary high costs the long term, ensuring that we are able to increase our focus on prevention in mainstream schools and the provision of our special schools.

In March 2018 the arrangements for SEND in Worcestershire were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. This inspection identified 12 key concerns and required the local area to produce a Written Statement of Action outlining how these key concerns would be addressed.

The inspection identified significant shortage in education provision in the local area for children and young people whose needs should be met in a specialist settings. At that time, 111 children were waiting to be allocated a place in a special school, and 25 children were not receiving education. Additionally, the inspection determined that some mainstream schools were working in ways which were in contrast to the spirit of the SEND reforms.

As a result of these findings, the Written Statement of Action has focused on improving inclusive practices in mainstream schools and ensuring there is an effective continuum of SEND provision in Worcestershire. This work has resulted in a decrease in the number of children with first time Education Health and Care Plans being placed in special schools, reducing some, but not all, of the pressure on the system. Despite these developments Worcestershire still has a higher percentage of children and young people placed in special schools than the national average, (57% of school age pupils with an EHCP are in a state funded special school, compared to the national average of 53%).

The number of children and young people identified with special educational needs and disabilities has increased over the last several years. This is reflective of a growing population, but also improvements in identification of need and changes in legislation particularly affecting young people aged 16-25. New housing has bolstered the population in Worcestershire, but reception intake has decreased due to a falling birth rate since 2016 and is anticipated to plateau. At the same time, pupil numbers in secondary schools are in a stage of growth as higher cohort numbers from pre-2016 make their way through the system. This is particularly the case in Worcester City which will also experience significant growth in housing over the next decade.

If no further progress were made on supporting pupils to remain in mainstream schools, an investment of circa £6.5m would be required to maintain the percentage of pupils in state-funded special schools, and we would continue to be dependent on independent and out-of-county provision for a number of pupils with EHCPs. This is based on the average new build rate to deliver new special school places across England of £85,000 per place. If Worcestershire were aligned with average number of pupils placed in special schools nationally, no additional places would be required, and we could begin to support pupils attending independent placements back into state funded provision. Continued efforts are required to ensure we move towards this goal, however, cultural changes of this kind take

time to embed and by forecasting a continual slow progression back to national averages, additional places will still be required by 2025 to an estimated cost of £2.5m.

In May 2021 approximately 24 CYP were in mainstream schools or Mainstream Autism Bases awaiting placement in specialist provision. This number has significantly reduced since 2018 when 111 CYP were in this position. An additional 16 CYP awaiting a specialist placement had bespoke educational packages in place, including attendance in Alternative Provision and home-based education. Delays in transition between schools can be stressful for families and once the need for a specialist placement has been agreed, the process for identifying a school and the child's transition should be timely and smooth. A number of factors mean that currently this is not always family's experience. These are as follows:

- Spaces are not always available in Worcestershire special schools
- In some cases, parental confidence in Worcestershire provision is low and this influences their preference for an independent setting
- Worcestershire does not have a suitable school to meet the special educational needs of the child

Responses to the 2021 Parent Carer SEND survey identified that parent carers want to see an increase in specialist provision for CYP in Worcestershire, particularly in the focused areas covered in this report.

In all cases, parent carers of children with an EHCP have the right to challenge any decision made by WCF in regard to the placement named in the plan. Any parent carer making such an appeal to the SEND Tribunal must first consider whether they would be willing to engage in mediation with WCF (led by independent body) to determine whether agreement can be reached about placement.

In the last year 11 tribunal appeals were lodged in relation by parent carers in relation to their placement preference. The tribunal process can place an emotional strain on families. Parent carers can incur significant legal costs and often require considerable time to prepare for and participate in the appeal process and hearing. There is also a financial and time cost to WCF and relationships with parent carers can be adversely affected by the tribunal process.

Worcestershire's current spend on independent placements for children with SEND is approximately £9.3 million. This spend puts a considerable strain on the High Level Needs budget and reduces the spend available to support children and young people in other ways. Often independent placements are located out of county meaning Children and young people are educated away from their local communities which has an impact on family and peer relationships and can, incur high transport costs or the need for residential places., participation in community activities and as young people transition to adulthood, links to potential employers and housing options.

Purpose of the report

This report describes the provision made in Worcestershire special schools and enhanced provision in mainstream schools for children and young people with SEND. In addition it provides information about placements made for children and young people within and outside of Worcestershire in independent special and mainstream schools and colleges.

The report focuses on current provision, what we know about future need and views of parent carers, CYP and educational settings where known. It also makes proposals for what is needed to meet the needs of CYP with SEND in Worcestershire going forward. These proposals are intended to address increasing need as a result of population growth and also historical placement trends which have resulted in more CYP attending high cost independent and out of county provision. As well as looking at placements in the 9 Worcestershire special schools located around the county catering for CYP , the report focuses on a number of areas where analysis of need, historic placement patterns and the financial cost of placement indicates our current provision is not sustainable. The focused areas for discussion are as follows:

1. Special school places for CYP for cognition and learning difficulties
2. Social Emotional Mental Health Difficulties
3. Post 16 (with a particular focus on 19-25)
4. Autism
5. Residential educational provision in two of our special schools
6. Sensory impairment

Structure of the report

Each area of need discussed includes the following sections:

- Current provision
- What we know about need in Worcestershire
- Proposals

Next steps

Stakeholders are invited to feedback their views on our conclusions and proposals as outlined in this report. Feedback is welcomed about the specific areas of need discussed and about the plan as a whole. This feedback will be used to inform our plan for SEND provision in Worcestershire.

The plan will inform our report and proposals to Cabinet in the autumn for decision making regarding any request for capital funding to support our developments. In addition, we will be sharing plans with the Department of Education at the end of June with regard to broad proposals in relation to our annual SEND capital fund for 2021-22. This is an annual sum of money paid to Local Authorities to improve and develop accommodation for CYP with SEND. In the last financial year this money was focused on the development of Mainstream Autism Bases. This year, it is proposed that we prioritise developments in Post 16 SEND provision, focused in the main on local provision for 19-25 year olds with complex needs who too often are placed in high cost Independent Specialist Provision at the present time.

1. SPECIAL SCHOOL PLACES FOR CHILDREN WITH COGNITION AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

CURRENT PROVISION

Worcestershire has seven special schools located across the county which provide education for CYP with cognition and learning difficulties and additional special educational needs. Children can only be placed in these schools if they have an Education Health and Care Plan.

School	Location	Age range	Ofsted rating	Maintained/ Academy	Additional information
Fort Royal Community Primary School	Worcester	2-11	Good	Maintained	CYP typically transfer to Regency High
Regency High School	Worcester	11-19	Good	Academy	
Wyre Forest School	Kidderminster	2-19	Good	Maintained	
Pitcheroak School	Redditch	2-19	Good	Maintained	
The Vale of Evesham School	Evesham	2-19	Inadequate	Academy	
Rigby Hall School	Bromsgrove	2-19	Good	Maintained	
Chadsgrove School	Bromsgrove	2-19	Outstanding	Maintained	CYP's SEND arise from a physical disability or complex health need

Due to the growing population and pressure on places in our seven special schools for CYP with cognition and learning difficulties is greatest in Worcester City this report focuses on Fort Royal and Regency High.

Fort Royal

Over the last 5 years Fort Royal has grown in size from 164 children on roll to 215 children on roll (31% increase). To manage this increase in pupil numbers physical alterations have been made to the school site and a double mobile classroom added.

The school makes provision for for a number of pupils on role with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and other complex SEND which manifests in challenging behaviour. The lack of specialist provision in Worcestershire for children younger than Year 4 with these needs and challenges in identifying suitable long term special educational provision for these very young children puts additional pressure on places in the school.

The school features the site of the Early Years Assessment Unit which assesses most children in the south of the county who may have a SEND need. Fort Royal School has been working closely with WCF and neighbouring primary schools to support children from the nursery to move into mainstream reception classes where this is in the best interest of the pupils. Additionally, mainstream places have been identified for older children who are more able. These efforts have reduced some of the pressure on capacity at the school however additional solutions are needed to provide for current and forecast pupil numbers.

Regency

Regency School was built in the 1960s and has been extended and altered on a number of occasions. In 2007 eight additional classrooms were built along with considerable remodelling of the premises to adapt the school specifically for secondary school pupils. The school experienced a further expansion in 2018 to provide an additional four classrooms. This allowed the school to increase from 170 to 210 places. School numbers have further increased to 232 as of the September 2020 census well above our forecast of 211 for the 20-21 academic year.

The increase in pupil numbers at the school has until recent years been in line with the growth in pupils at Fort Royal. However, year 7 intakes in Sept 2018 and 2020 were notably higher than cohorts transferring from Fort Royal. This growth can be attributed to the unprecedented increase in pupils across other year groups in the school over the last 12 months. Additionally few pupils are leaving the school in Years 12 and 13, increasing the pressure on capacity.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT NEED IN WORCESTERSHIRE?

Fort Royal

Due to falling birth rates, we are expecting demand for places at Fort Royal to stabilise and remain at current levels until 2025, however these numbers are still higher than the capacity of the school. In addition, the school relies on a double mobile classroom which has planning permission due to expire September 2021, which currently hosts their Nursery Assessment Unit. The current site is physically limited in terms of the potential for expansion.

Regency

The increase in placements outside of Year 7 at Regency in the last year has placed considerable pressure on capacity. Conversations are ongoing with the school to ensure that requests for placements for CYP who have previously attended mainstream schools are fully considered before an offer of a placement is made. Indications suggest that some pupils whose needs could be best met with a continued placement in a mainstream school are being offered provision at Regency and this is limiting the availability of places for CYP who most need them. This pressure is likely to be exacerbated by the increased cohort of pupils currently at Fort Royal transferring to Regency in 2023 and 2024.

A strategic approach is needed between WCF, the school and DfE (as Regency is an academy) which prioritises available places for CYP with the complex SEN. Additionally a shift in practice is needed which supports more able pupils to return to mainstream education where appropriate.

If these strategic changes are not successful, taking these recent trends into account and demand across the county, we are estimating a demand for 291 places at Regency for 2025.

OPPORTUNITIES/PROPOSALS

Fort Royal

Additional places are required at Fort Royal school which cannot be accommodated by current arrangements. The options for addressing accommodation at the school include:

- *Undertaking a review of the current accommodation and potential for expansion on the existing site.*
- *Considering whether a new site for Fort Royal is required to ensure accommodation is fit for purpose and sufficient for the forecasted increase in pupil numbers going forward.*

Regency

- *Reviewing the commissioning approach with Regency with the aims of supporting pupils back to mainstream wherever suitable and ensuring that places are used only for those with the highest level of need whose needs cannot be met in mainstream.*
- *Development of outreach support from Regency to strengthen the capacity of mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with less complex needs.*
  Review long term accommodation requirements dependent on the effectiveness of these changes.

2. SPECIAL SCHOOL PLACES FOR CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES (SEMH)

CURRENT PROVISION

SEMH needs manifests themselves in many ways. These may include CYP becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.

As of the January 2020 census there were 706 Worcestershire pupils with an EHCP which list SEMH as the primary need. These pupils attend a range of provision. Of the 292 pupils in mainstream schools with a primary need of SEMH, 19 were currently waiting for a specialist SEMH setting as of May 2021.

Type	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	KS5	Total
Mainstream school	39	88	96	51	18	292
Independent special school	5	18	28	28	33	112
Worcestershire special schools for CYP with SEMH	0	31	40	37	0	108
Worcestershire special schools for CYP with Cognition and Learning Difficulties	1	1	21	23	21	67
Further education	0	0	0	0	56	56
Not in School	0	2	6	7	15	30
Alternative Provision	4	6	7	8	2	27
Unknown	0	0	0	0	14	14
Total	49	146	198	154	159	706

CYP with SEMH live across the 6 districts in Worcestershire with the highest level of need in Worcester.

District	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	KS5	Total
Bromsgrove	8	13	25	16	17	79
Malvern Hills	12	25	25	13	21	96
Redditch	5	24	35	31	34	129
Worcester	11	33	41	31	30	146
Wychavon	12	34	25	37	22	130
Wyre Forest	5	17	45	26	33	126

Worcestershire has two special schools for children with SEMH, Riversides School and Kingfisher School supporting CYP from across Worcestershire, with pupil admissions spread across Key Stages 2 to 4. A number of pupils are placed at the school following permanent exclusion. The majority of pupils placed in the two schools have SEMH as their primary need, however there are also a number of pupils being supported who have additional needs, for example 17 pupils across the two schools have Autistic Spectrum Disorder as their primary or secondary need.

School	Location	Age range	Ofsted rating	Additional information
Riversides School	Worcester	7-16	Good	CYP typically transfer to Kingfisher School
Kingfisher School	Redditch	7-16	Good	

Timing and availability of placements across the two SEMH special schools means that although many pupils attending the schools are from the local area, a number of pupils from the Redditch area attend Riversides (in Worcester) increasing travel time. This increased travel time has both a financial cost to the transport budget and a personal impact on the CYP.

Riversides

The school consists of a mixture of buildings over 2 sites in the middle of Worcester. Concerns have been raised about the suitability of buildings in terms of location and availability of internal and external space. As of the January 2020 census there were 43 pupils at Riversides. The number on roll at Riversides has remained consistent over the last 10 years.

Kingfisher

The number of pupils on role has doubled at Kingfisher over the last 10 years, increasing from 47 in Jan 2010 to 94 in October 2020. This is in part due to the school extending provision in include Key Stage 2 pupils. In response to need, the school will be expanding by another 20 places in September 2021 and have indicated that they are willing to open a separate unit to increase provision by a further 60 places, with possible capital investment to enable this expansion from the Central Learning Partnership Trust.

SEMH placements in independent special schools

As of the January 2020 census, 112 pupils with SEMH were in independent special schools. 82% of these pupils were in Key Stages 3-5. Worcestershire does not currently have provision for Key Stage 5 pupils at our two SEMH special schools or within our 4 secondary state funded Alternative Provisions, making this an age group where are particularly dependent on independent provision.

A significant number of pupils in independent special schools are placed there as a result of comorbid SEMH and ASD.

What do we know about need in Worcestershire?

The number of pupils in Worcestershire with SEMH as their primary need is forecast to rise from 706 to 824 in 2025. This is based upon projections for the entire mainstream population and the number of EHCPs per cohort rising to 4.1% of all mainstream pupils. The proportion of EHCPs citing SEMH as the primary need is assumed to remain constant. By 2025 the numbers of KS1 mainstream pupils are expected to drop whilst older cohorts are expected to rise. Forecasts indicate a distribution across the six Worcestershire districts.

	2025 forecast				
District	**KS1**	**KS2**	**KS3**	**KS4**	**KS5**
Bromsgrove	7	16	29	18	21
Malvern Hills	11	31	29	15	26
Redditch	4	29	41	35	43
Worcester	10	40	48	35	38
Wychavon	11	41	30	41	27
Wyre Forest	4	21	53	29	41
Countywide	47	178	230	173	196

Although the numbers of KS1 mainstream pupils are expected to drop by 2025, the lack of specialist placements for this age group in Worcestershire means we are currently reliant on independent settings currently and short term placements in Alternative Provision.

Additionally, despite targeted work in the last year to reduce the number of students with SEND who are not in education employment or training (NEET), young people with SEMH remain at high risk of NEET and provision in further education colleges is often unsuitable. This is exacerbated by the lack of places for Key Stage 5 pupils in either our special schools or our Alternative Provisions.

Based on current forecast demographic growth, we have forecast an increase in demand for places at Riversides school up to 68 in January 2025, and continual increases at Kingfisher to 123 in 2025. This forecast includes places for KS1 and KS5 pupils not currently provided for at the schools.

Opportunities/Proposals

Changes to existing provision

Mainstream schools

- Aligned with the Exclusions and AP review, plan a programme and commissioning approach to support more pupils with SEMH to remain in mainstream including guidance and outreach (particularly in secondary schools).

Special schools

- Develop a cultural focus while in special school placements to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream where possible. This will include a review of the commissioning strategy and focused support to existing SEMH schools to enable to transition of pupils back to mainstream settings where possible.
- Review current accommodation, school organisation and curriculum offer for the two SEMH schools with a focus on:
    - Riversides accommodation
    - Need for places for CYP with SEMH who also have a diagnosis of ASD
- Extend age range of pupils in Kingfisher to include Key Stages 5.
- Consider relative merits of extending provision in Kingfisher or commissioning medium term assessment placements in primary Alternative Provisions for Key Stage 1 SEMH pupils with EHCPs.

Developing new specialist provision

- Commission KS5 places for CYP with an EHCP who have attended mainstream schools and are at risk of, or currently NEET in Alternative Provisions in the North and South of the county.

3. POST 16

CURRENT PROVISION

The post-16 education and training landscape for young people with EHCPs is diverse. It encompasses school sixth forms (both mainstream and special schools), sixth form colleges, general further education (FE) colleges, 16-19 academies, special post-16 institutions, and vocational learning and training providers in the private or voluntary sector.

Most young people who remain in education and training beyond the age of 16/19 attend a general further education college within Worcestershire from one of the following main FE settings: Heart of Worcestershire College, Kidderminster College or Warwickshire College Group. Six of our Worcestershire special schools also offer provision for young people with learning difficulties age 16 to 19.

A small, but significant number of young people with more complex and profound special educational needs access FE provision through a independent specialist provision (ISP), sometimes on a residential basis.

The four main Independent Specialist Providers are:

- Queen Alexandra College (QAC)
- Glasshouse, Ruskin Mill College
- Derwen College
- National Star College

In the north of the county Chadsgrove school, a local authority maintained special school for children with complex physical & learning difficulties, has also developed a 13 place 19-25 provision, which is registered as a specialist further education college.

Year	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Total no post 16 learners	299	210	430	732	734
Number attending Mainstream FE setting	276	172	408	722	724
Number attending ISP	23	38	22	10	10

Whilst the number of placements in ISPs has decreased over time, the overall cost of a placement is exceptionally high and therefore represents a disproportionate spend from the High Level Needs budget.

The cost of an ISP placement cost can range from approximately £14.5k to £211k per learner each year and at the end of 2020 the total yearly spend for this cohort was nearly £4m.

Placements at ISPs are often made following successful appeal by parent carers to the SEND and Disability Tribunal, with the Tribunal agreeing with the parental view that local provision in Worcestershire cannot meet need.

	2018	2019	2020
Number of appeals lodged in relation to post-16 placement	8	9	21
Number of appeals proceeding to hearing	6	8	7
Number of appeals where parental view partially or completely upheld	4	7	6

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT NEED IN WORCESTERSHIRE?

Since the 2014 Children & Families Act, we have seen a sharp increase in the number of CYP with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). As a result, the numbers of learners moving into FE provision at 16 has increased by 60% over the last four years. Furthermore we know that many young people will remain in education and training from 19 onwards for 3 to 6 years.

Whilst large numbers of learners have continued to access education and training in mainstream FE colleges, there has been an over reliance on Independent specialist college placements for young people profound and multiples learning difficulties whose needs cannot be met in local FE settings as they require a highly differentiated curriculum and access to specialist support.

Demand for places is forecast to increase by a further 8 % over the next 4 years based on the numbers of children currently in secondary school with an EHCP who will be leaving school during this period.

Our focus therefore must be to provide a continuum of Post 16 provision (particularly for learners from 19-25) in partnership with Health and Social care partners that reduces the over reliance ISPs for young people whose needs cannot be met in mainstream FE colleges.

OPPORTUNITIES/PROPOSALS

Special schools

- Worcestershire's annual SEND capital funding grant for 2021 (c. £1.5m) has been prioritised for developing Post 16 provision, with a particular emphasis on post-19 places. This funding will allow us to carry out a procurement exercise with our special schools to identify opportunities to develop post-19 provision locally. It is our expectation that capital work on projects selected through this exercise will be part funded by the schools receiving funding from the SEND capital budget.
- Partnership working with health and social care to ensure that provision developed is able wherever possible to meet the holistic needs of young people who would otherwise need to attend ISPs.

4. AUTISM

CURRENT PROVISION

Data indicates that as of December 2020, there were 802 children and young people with EHCPs whose primary need was Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). 368 of these children were in specialist provision as below.

Type of Setting	Number of Children	Approximate cost to High Level Needs (HLN) budget per year
Local generic special school	201	£1.5m
Mainstream Autism Base	72	£404k
Worcestershire independent school	47	£2.4m
Maintained/academy special out of county	20	£312k
Independent out of county	16	£783k*
Electively Home Educated	10	Nil
Alternative Provision	2	£30k

***** Includes 6 pupils whose placements are joint funded with health and/or social care. Costs above relate to contribution from HLN budget only.

The majority of CYP with EHCPs for ASD in out of county schools are placed within the West Midlands and neighbouring authorities, although some are further afield.

A significant number of pupils in independent special schools are placed there as a result of SEMH and ASD needs. Additional placements in independent schools are also made for children with ASD who are more cognitively able but do not present with challenging behaviour. At present Worcestershire does not have a state funded special school designed specifically to meet the needs of pupils with Autism and we are therefore overly reliant on independent and out-of-county provision.

Parent carer feedback through the 2020 parent carer SEND survey indicated that more often than not mainstream schools lacked understanding of children's needs. This figure reduced in the 2021 survey to 22% indicating significant improvement in this area. However comments were also made in the 2021 survey about the need for increased specialist provision in Worcestershire, particularly for children with neurodevelopmental difficulties and those who are anxious. Approximately two thirds of respondents to both surveys listed autism as their child's primary need. Confidence in mainstream provision is a key driver in parental preference for placements and any development of new specialist provision for ASD must be underpinned by ongoing work to increase the skills and confidence of schools to identify and make timely provision for social communication needs.

Worcestershire has 12 Mainstream Autism Bases covering all phases of statutory school age education and districts. Places at these bases are available to CYP with an EHCP and a diagnosis of ASD who need additional support in comparison to those in mainstream schools. In the last year a further two bases have been agreed at Christopher Whitehead (x places) and Chaddesley Corbett (x places) schools due to open in September 2022.

In Autumn 2020 the distribution of pupils across the Mainstream Autism Bases was as follows:

	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
Bromsgrove (Rubery)	Beaconside Primary (8)							Waseley Hills High (10)				
Bromsgrove (Bromsgrove)	Meadows First ->					Parkside Middle (12)				North Bromsgrove High (9)		
Malvern Hills								Dyson Perrins (12)				
Redditch						Walkwood Middle (8)						
								Tudor Grange Academy (Redditch) (10)				
Worcester	Oldbury Park Primary (8)							Christopher Whitehead Language College (0)				
Wychavon (Pershore)						Abbey Park Middle (10)						
								Pershore High (13)				
Wyre Forest (Kidderminster)	Chaddesley Corbett Endowed Primary (0)							King Charles (17)				

The MABs are currently at capacity for the 20-21 academic year. MABS in the north of the county are predicted to have space for a small number of students from September 2021. Pershore MAB have agreed to develop their provision by September 2021 to take an additional 5 pupils.

What do we know about need in Worcestershire?

Forecasts indicate that there will be a further 543 pupils with ASD as primary need on the EHC Plan by 2025. Historic delays in the Umbrella diagnostic pathway may however be contributing to underdiagnosis of ASD in Worcestershire however, so this forecast may prove to be conservative as changes are being made to improve waiting times. Currently 46% of CYP with an EHCP who have ASD as a primary need are in specialist provision. If current placement trends continue this will mean there will be approximately 250 pupils with ASD requiring a new specialist placement. The impact of this demand on available places and the High Level Needs budget will be significant.

OPPORTUNITIES/PROPOSALS

Changes to existing provision

MABs

- *Develop process to monitor and improve provision and outcomes for CYP in MABs*
- *Review and improve Service Level agreements with MABS for clear entry, criteria and exit process*

Mainstream schools

- *Further develop and expand the role of WCF SEND support teams to build capacity to meet needs of CYP with ASD in mainstream schools through district support groups and ASD champions*

Developing new specialist provision

- *Develop a business case for a new special school in Worcestershire catering for approximately 80 CYP with ASD (or complex social communication needs without a diagnosis) as their primary need whose needs cannot be met within our current specialist provision including MABs. This provision would meet the needs of the 10% of the current forecasted increase in number of pupils with ASD who would otherwise be predicted to require placement in out of county or independent provision. Additionally there would be capacity for 25% of those currently in out of county or independent places to return to state funded local education provision.*

5. RESIDENTIAL EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENTS AT VALE OF EVESHAM AND WYRE FOREST SCHOOLS

CURRENT PROVISION

Two Worcestershire special schools include residential provision for learners. These are based at Wyre Forest School and Vale of Evesham. Both provisions operate for 38 weeks of the year and cater typically for secondary aged pupils. Residential provision must be named on a child's Education Health and Care Plan and the child must also attend day provision in the school. There are strong links between residential provision and the day schools.

The residential provision is registered with and inspected annually by Ofsted using the Boarding Schools and Residential Special Schools Framework and National Minimum Standards (NMS). Compliance with the NMS means that risk assessment on other residents needs to be carried out before the offer of a place to a pupil can be made. Each school is subject to half termly monitoring of the NMS by an external body. The schools are required as part of the NMS to report on benefits to the child's learning and development in school as a result of their attendance at residential provision.

The purpose of residential provision in the schools has to be published on their website. As the needs of pupils change over time, the stated purpose is amended accordingly. For example the current cohort of pupils at Wyre Forest residential provision is more complex than in the past, with significant sensory difficulties.

The limitation of the schools' OFSTED registration status means they are only able to offer placements in the residential provision to CYP who attend the school for their education. Despite this, placement requests continue to be received by Vale of Evesham from Social Care. Head Teachers describe a lack of understanding from multi-agency colleagues about their limited capacity to provide residential provision based on the limitations due to Ofsted registration conditions, risk assessments undertaken, the content of EHCPs, and waiting lists. They would like multi-agency colleagues to view the residential provision on offer as part of rather than all of a holistic package to meet children's needs.

The stated aim of the provision (described by the Head Teachers) is to prevent young people from needing to go out of county to independent special education placements. Many students attend the provision to learn Independent living skills, particularly where families are struggling to deliver this at home (for example where families have multiple children with additional needs).There is a focus on planning for Preparation for Adulthood for year 9 pupils and above, particularly where young people are likely to transition to supported living when they leave education rather than going to college or being supported by social care in adulthood. Decisions about placements in the residential provision are currently made independently by the schools. The capacity of families to meet children's needs and foster independence are taken into account when deciding who to prioritise for the provision.

Pupils attending the residential provision at Wyre Forest and Vale of Evesham are funded at the top up funding rate of £23,602 per annum. This funding is drawn down from the High Level Needs budget. There is currently no contribution to costs from Social Care or Health.

Wyre Forest School

Wyre Forest School has a 12-bed residential school provision on their school site called Russell House. There is scope for an increase of 4 places to total of 16.

The school operates a flexible approach to residential provision depending on the needs of the child. This means that children can see their parent carers where appropriate during the week and attend community activities. Provision is often reduced in response to progress in independent living skills and the capacity of the family to meet need.

'Evidence for Learning' is used to monitor the effectiveness of the Independent Living Skills curriculum. This has received positive feedback from Ofsted. The school report positive outcomes with some children returning to families and some staying until transition to other residential schools.

Russell House was last inspected in December 2019. It was rated as 'good'. Feedback from CYP in the residential provision and their parent cares indicated that:

> 'Young people are positive about their experiences in residence. Young people say that they enjoy visits from a therapy dog and more recently they have started to attend a local youth club.
>
> Young people talked with enthusiasm about the development of a communication area and how this gives them the opportunity to express if they have any worries or concerns in their individual style.
>
> When young people use the area, managers act promptly to respond to what young people say. As a result, young people feel that they are listened to and have an influence over their care. Young people say that they feel safe and they enjoy the company of staff.
>
> Parents were unanimously positive about their relationships with staff and the benefits of residency to the young people.'

Vale of Evesham

Vale of Evesham has a residential provision for 15 students attached to the school building. However currently the school can only cater for 10, as disrepair of the roof and windows mean accommodation is not fit for purpose in one of the suites. The school have funded work for the improvement of this accommodation and full capacity is expected from September 2021. The residential accommodation at the school is not currently suitable for pupils with complex needs.

The school are not yet at the point where they are able to deliver provision flexibly but aspire to do so. The Head Teacher started at the school full-time in January 2020, new to residential provision, after working two days a week from November 2019.
Vale of Evesham is situated next door to Vale Lodge, a 52-week placement children's home catering for children with disabilities. Two of the children at Vale Lodge currently attend Vale of Evesham day provision and another is at Wyre Forest Special School.

Residential provision at the School was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2019. It received an inadequate judgement. A monitoring visit took place in November 2020 and highlighted improvements made in the provision to date. Feedback to Ofsted from CYP indicated that:

> 'Inspectors found that children and young people enjoy their overnight stays and have positive experiences. This contributes to the progress that children and young people make.'

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT NEED IN WORCESTERSHIRE?

Records available from the SEND casework indicate that over half of the CYP attending residential provision at the two schools are open to social care (including Children with Disabilities, Young Adults Team and Child Protection). Approximately 17% have previously been open to social care, with involvement subsequently ceased. The head teachers at the two schools report that care arrangements and the capacity of families to meet need are taken into consideration when considering the need for a residential placement.

Wyre Forest School currently operates a waiting list for the provision.

The Children with Disabilities team group manager has indicated a desire to explore the possibility of one of the beds at each of the residential provisions for emergency respite provision for children with disabilities in crisis. This would prevent the need for a small number of children coming into care in situations where families are under acute stress due to pressures such as illness, exhaustion, poor mental health and situations with siblings. Access to these bed for a discrete period for example 4 nights a week or 2 weeks solid would give parent carers time to recuperate or, for example, address presenting issues.

OPPORTUNITES/PROPOSALS

Additional information gathering

- Clarify limitations of Ofsted registration regarding use of places at residential provision for emergency respite and communicate outcome to social care
- Case audits of children and young people placed in residential provision to understand care needs and inform joint working with social care
- Consider current placements in out of area schools to determine whether additional provision developed as a result of proposed accommodation improvements at Vale of Evesham could be used as part of transition planning back into Worcestershire provision

Changes to existing provision

- Focus support from provision on Year 10-13 pupils to enable development of independent living skills as identified as a need in Year 9 annual review to enable young people to stay in Worcestershire beyond age 19 (preventing need for out of area independent provision)
- Agree a county wide operational brief for the two residential provisions which will then be reviewed and updated yearly.
- Identify team lead within SEND casework to be a link for the residential provision Head Teachers with skills and knowledge regarding this type of provision
- Termly operational multi-agency meeting (to include Children with Disabilities team, Young Adults Team, SEND casework link and Head Teachers to consider arrangements for current placements (progression planning) and identify possible future placements
- Discussion with social care and Vale Lodge regarding potential for improvements to joined up planning with Vale Lodge as part of social care sufficiency planning

Developing new provision

- There is insufficient data to suggest that further new residential provision for statutory school age children at special schools in Worcestershire is needed at this time.

6. SENSORY IMPAIRMENT (SI)

CURRENT PROVISION

CYP with a sensory impairment are those who have a visual impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or multisensory impairment (MSI). As of May 2021, CYP with an SI were placed in a range of settings within and outside of Worcestershire.

	VI	HI	MI	Total
Number of CYP	370	404	151	925
CYP supported by SI team*	202	195	109	506
EY and YR mainstream	28	48	12	88
EY special	8	2	16	26
School age mainstream	141	112	6	259
Post 16 mainstream	9	11	0	20
Worcestershire special	6	16	67	89
Independent/out of county	10	6	8	24

*Depending on the severity of loss and need, CYP with a SI are allocated support visits by a Specialist Teacher totalling anything between 2 hours of monitoring per year, to 6 hours of direct teaching per week. Children in specialist settings have access to a Specialist Teacher throughout the school day.

Specialist teaching and assessment for children with a SI requires a mandatory qualification, as does their Habilitation and Audiology support due to the highly specialist nature of sensory impairment provision.

Mainstream provision

VI

The majority of CYP with VI attend mainstream schools. To meet needs, each individual school is resourced with appropriate teaching assistant (TA) support and specialist equipment and undertakes environmental adaptations as well as modifications to buildings. Recruitment of suitably trained staff remains an issue for Braille and British Sign Language (BSL) qualified TAs.

Braillists

There are currently 6 braillists in Worcestershire mainstream schools. CYP requiring support from a braillist require full time TA support and specialist equipment to access the curriculum, and receive an enhanced level of support at 6 hours per week from a Specialist Teacher, plus weekly habilitation. There is an additional one off cost for the set up of specialist equipment for a braillist of approximately £7000 upon transition to high school.

Degenerative Conditions for pupils with VI

The needs of CYP with degenerative VI conditions can change quickly, sometimes without warning. As of April 2021 there were 21 CYP in Worcestershire with these conditions who will require rapid adaptations to their curriculum and support in the event of deterioration, posing significant challenges for the CYP, their family and service delivery. This challenge would be reduced by centralising support in a VI resource base which could then offer a swift response with in-house specialist equipment, trained and experienced TAs and subject staff supported by a QTVI experienced in planning accessible lessons for these learners.

High Needs Pupils with VI

As of April 2021 there were 49 pupils in mainstream schools with high level needs. These pupils require significant adaptations to the curriculum and support, equivalent to the provision offered at New College Worcester, an independent residential specialist secondary school for CYP with VI. Where mainstream school provision is unsuccessful, a family may express a preference for a placement at this school.

HI

The majority of CYP with HI attend mainstream schools. As of April 2021, 19 of these pupils had a profound hearing loss and high needs. Of these pupils, 16 are in KS1 and the other 3 are in secondary provision. These pupils receive one to one TA support with access to the curriculum including BSL. The pupils are considered high risk for applications to specialist settings if their transition to secondary school or mainstream placement is not successful.

Ongoing issues regarding recruitment and retention of suitable TAs creates further challenges for mainstream placements. A small number of HI pupils in this situation are considered at risk of placement breakdown as a result of difficulties developing spoken language.

Specialist Provision

Independent provision placements for children and young people with a SI are high cost and scarce. As of April 2021 there were 11 **pupils** attending specialist placements as a result of their SI at a total annual cost of approximately **£620k.**

Of these 11 pupils, 6 CYP with VI attend New College Worcester and Royal National College, Hereford. Typically, the reasons for VI pupils attending a specialist placement are access to a full time QTVI, on-site delivery of habilitation, independent living skills and mobility as part of the extended school day, tailored clubs and the opportunity to be among peers with a VI.

5 HI Pupils access specialist provision at Longwill and Braidwood, Birmingham and Mary Hare, Hampshire. Typically the reasons for a child requiring a specialist placement base are delayed communication and language skills or a need for communication using BSL, in addition to access to a deaf peer group.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT NEED IN WORCESTERSHIRE

The proportion of CYP with SI has remained stable over the last five years (around 1% of the population) and numbers of CYP with SI are expected to rise in line with population growth over the coming years. There has however been a rise in the complexity and severity of CYP's sensory impairment. CYP with SI are not easy to identify as schools can fail to record SI on the census as these pupils do not generally have other areas of need, so are often overlooked, despite specialist teacher input. This highlights a wider issue around recognition of needs by settings.

A number of CYP with SI currently in mainstream schools are at risk of placement breakdown and subsequent move to high cost independent provision for the reasons outlined in the previous section.

Feedback from some parent carers indicates a desire for increased local provision. A parent of one pupil with a profound hearing loss stated she would prefer a local but more specialist provision. This pupil requires a highly modified curriculum dependent on TA support, creating issues around access and attendance when the TA is absent.

Another parent of a pupils with a profound visual impairment who has recently transferred from a mainstream to a specialist setting, indicated that she would have preferred her child to attend a resource base in Worcestershire.

SENCos in mainstream settings also support the development of local resourced provision. One SENCo, when asked about their views regarding a VI resource base said it is "logical to build expertise – settings find it a challenge when pupils are spread across the county – with this approach, funding would be more targeted". Another, when asked whether they felt a pupil with HI would have benefited from a resource base provision, commented, "I have no question that this would have been a better move for her".

OPPORTUNITIES/PROPOSALS

- Consider resourcing two mainstream schools with a specialism in SI to provide for CYP whose current placements are at risk of breakdown. These bases would provide financially sustainable and realistic alternative placements for those pupils whose parents have indicated they may seek a place in out of county provision. They would also provide an option for parents whose CYP currently attend independent settings to return to local state funded provision on transition to secondary education.