

## CABINET

15 November 2022

### FUTURE COMMISSIONING OF EARLY YEARS PATHWAYS

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services

Strategic Aim:	Sustainable Lives	
Key Decision: No	Forward Plan Reference: FP/220722	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Councillor David Wilby, Portfolio Holder Education and Children's Services	
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Ward Councillors	All	

#### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 1) Agrees that Rutland County Council should continue to work with Rutland Schools Forum and Rutland Early Years childcare and learning providers to develop services that best support children in an early year's environment with emerging Special Educational needs.
- 2) Endorse an engagement programme with the Early Years sector and parents to begin to consider what the future Early Years SEN provision in Rutland may be and what steps would need to be taken to best meet children's needs to ensure they thrive in their communities.
- 3) Notes that following engagement and planning, there will be a need to consider future Early Years SEN provision in Rutland and any requirement to consult if changes were to be proposed.

## 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Rutland vision is to support all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND) to lead healthy, independent, and safe lives; to be a County that promotes inclusion; to maximise their opportunities to be independent and focus on their abilities not their disabilities; and wherever possible, have their needs met locally. (Rutland SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2019).

- 1.2 Working with the Rutland Schools' Forum, Rutland County Council has been in the process of reviewing how children with special educational needs (SEN) can best be supported in an Early Years environment proposed next steps are set out in this report.

## **2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1 There is a government drive to reform SEND and Inclusion systems to ensure children can access local education with their peers. The recent SEND Green paper<sup>1</sup> sets out the ambition to restore families' trust and confidence in an inclusive education system with excellent mainstream provision that puts children and young people first; and the need to create a system that is financially sustainable and built for long-term success.
- 2.2 Added to this Rutland County Council will be included in the second wave of Department for Education (DfE) Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme beginning in January 2023 aimed at supporting local authorities to improve delivery of SEND services for children and young people while ensuring services are sustainable.
- 2.3 The Rutland SEND Recovery Plan is designed to support Schools Forum to bring the Dedicated Schools Grant overspent High Needs Block back into balance over time. It includes an array of projects all designed to improve the SEND system to meet needs earlier when children's Social Emotional or Mental Health needs emerge or seem likely to escalate.
- 2.4 Over the past couple of years Rutland County Council has worked with experts in the field of Special Needs to help consider opportunities to enhance Rutland's Early Years provision for children with emerging needs. This has been focused on strengthening families' choices for provision close to home; considering how the Dedicated Schools Grant funding is currently allocated and preparing for changes expected as a result of the Government's Green Paper proposing changes to SEND systems.
- 2.5 Given that work is underway to make services more accessible for families these changes will align to the Family Hub programme. Family hubs are a way of joining up services locally by bringing existing family support services together to improve access; making connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Family hubs bring together services for families with children of all ages (0-19) or up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with an effective Start for Life offer at their core. The development of the Family Hub links to priorities in the Children and Young Peoples' Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Rutland Place Plan.
- 2.6 The intention is to increase opportunities for children with SEND or emerging needs to access Early Years education closer to home and in their own communities, thereby reducing the need for lengthy journeys, and where they can benefit from the support of family and are able to form friendships with other local children.
- 2.7 There is an opportunity to build confidence and capacity in the Early Years' leaders and the workforce (both Private, Voluntary, and Independent, and maintained nurseries and childminders) to support children with special educational needs and disabilities, in line with the direction of Government priorities set out in the recent Green Paper on SEND<sup>2</sup>. This will potentially develop a sector led model of support around provider and family like the successful Schools Support Partnership (formerly known as Education Inclusion Partnership) model at Primary and Secondary phase and increase opportunities for children

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<sup>1</sup> SEND Green Paper: Right Support, Right Place, Right time.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-and-ap-green-paper-responding-to-the-consultation/summary-of-the-send-review-right-support-right-place-right-time>

with SEND or emerging needs to transition, with support, into a mainstream Reception class in their local community, rather than needing specialist provision.

- 2.8 The intention of this work is to reduce the number of children requiring out-of-county special school placements at high cost and an increase in those children with additional needs being able to achieve good outcomes in mainstream schools while remaining close to home (taking into account parental preference) so that children have their needs met in their local communities.
- 2.9 As part of the SEND Recovery Plan objectives Rutland County Council (RCC) engaged SEND Consultancy, a group of experienced SEND professionals to carry out a review of the special provision at the Parks School in Oakham and talk to wider Early Years practitioners.
- 2.10 Following this a working group was established to consider the recommendations which included RCC staff, Education professionals and governors, the group's workplan considered how to develop a more inclusive Early Years pathway, to include a wider group of children, including those with additional needs. It also explored how to meet wider family needs and the best use of available funding.
- 2.11 What followed from this work and some discussions with Early Years leaders was recognition that there was scope to build further confidence and capacity in the Early Years' workforce (both Private, Voluntary and Independent, and maintained nurseries) to enable practitioners to support more children with emerging needs in line with the direction of Government priorities.

### **3 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

- 3.1 An engagement programme with the county's Early Years sector and parents, will follow over the next 18 months, determining the potential options for further support for very young children with emerging needs, as well as their families.
- 3.2 This engagement process could lead to proposals around future Early Years SEN provision in Rutland. However, nothing has been decided yet. Any proposals around current and future arrangements that could result in a change to local services would require formal consultation with parents and families.

### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Engagement with Early Years providers and families requires a small budget of £10k to enable meaningful dialogue.
- 4.2 Any future proposed changes would require a costed business rationale.

### **5 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 A detailed Risks, Actions, and Decisions (RAID) Log is held at Project and Programme level to identify and manage Risks and Issues throughout the programme.

### **6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1 Maintain services as they currently are – this would reduce the likelihood of meeting the intentions set out in the SEND Green Paper and achieving a balanced high needs block budget.

### **7 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed because there are no risks or issues to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

## **8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

8.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. The Local Authority has a duty under the Children Act and the SEND Code of Practice to meet the needs of children with additional need or deemed to be children in need.

## **9 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no community safety implications.

9.2 The LA has a statutory obligation to safeguard vulnerable children at home and in the community, some children with SEND may be supported as Children in Need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989

## **10 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Families have told us how important ‘wraparound’ support for a family is, especially in the early days of an emerging additional need or confirmation of an SEND diagnosis. Opportunities to provide wider family support for the parents and siblings of a child with SEND through the integrated support available through the new Family Hub arrangements.

## **11 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 RCC capacity to support meaningful community engagement.

## **12 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

12.1 Rutland County Council should continue to work with Rutland Schools Forum and Rutland Early Years childcare and learning providers to develop services that best support children in an Early Years environment with emerging Special Educational needs.

12.2 An engagement programme is planned with Early Years sector providers and parents to begin to consider what steps might need to be proposed in the future to best meet children’s needs to ensure they thrive in their communities.

12.3 Following engagement and planning a further Cabinet paper will set out considerations related to future Early Years SEN provision in Rutland and any requirement to consult if changes were to be proposed.

## **13 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers

## **14 APPENDICES**

There are no appendices

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