

CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT – 6 APRIL 2011

PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP AN AUTISM EDUCATIONAL RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

Report by Director of Children Young People and Families

Introduction

1. This project is part of the Business Strategy 2011 and aims to contribute to the savings of £1m from 2012/13 on Out County placements for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). Other strategies to reduce reliance on costly out county placements are in development and will contribute to the savings target, for example the cross regional provision for children in care and increasing use of local independent providers.
2. We currently have 23 children with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) placed in Out County residential placements at a cost of £2.7m per annum. There is a gap in provision in Oxfordshire and ASC diagnosis/prevalence is increasing.
3. It is anticipated that savings of approximately £60,000 to £90,000 per placement can be made if ASC educational residential provision is set up in Oxfordshire.
4. Since our Business Strategy was presented through Cabinet and Children's Services Scrutiny, we have been undertaking a call for views on the proposed project involving parents, carers, children and professionals.
5. We have also undertaken more research on the costs of such provision and how we can use the Social Return on Investment methodology to support the development of this project.

Project Planning

6. A project steering group was set up in January and has met approximately fortnightly. The Steering group is chaired by Janet Johnson (Strategic Lead SEN) and includes representatives from Children's SEN Support Services, Social and Community Services - Learning Disabilities Commissioner for Health and Care, Commissioning and Contracting Team, Children's Social Care - Disabilities, Environment and Economy - Property and a special school Headteacher representative. Although a Children's Health

Commissioner has been invited to attend, no representative has attended to date; this is being pursued. We also intend to involve a GP through the shadow GP Commissioning Consortia, parents and carers and those providing services for this client group including hospital consultants and Oxford Healthcare.

7. An Equalities Impact Assessment was produced for the Business Strategy, refer to annex 1 and is kept under review by the Directorate.

Consultation

8. As this is a significant, long term project a call for views was issued from 5th to 28th February. 42 responses were received.
9. The aim of the call for views was to help shape the development of the educational residential provision and to ensure that any proposals build on the experience and expertise of families and those supporting them. The consultation was sent to:
 - parents/carers of children with autism (or a similar profile of educational/functional needs) who are currently at, or have recently left, schools or colleges outside Oxfordshire
 - children and young people with autism (or a similar profile of educational/functional needs) who are currently at, or have recently left, schools or colleges outside Oxfordshire
 - professionals and providers from education, health, social care and other areas, representative bodies and those from the voluntary sector.
10. Questions were devised by the project steering group, with advice from Oxfordshire Family Support Network and Autism Oxford. They covered areas such as the need for an educational residential provision in the county, experiences of a child or young person going to an out of county provision, possible target and age groups for the new provision and characteristics.
11. In response to the question *To what extent do you think that an educational residential provision is needed for children with ASC in Oxfordshire?* 15 out of 16 parents/carers agreed or strongly agreed, 2 (out of 2) young people and 23 (out of 23) professionals or providers also agreed or strongly agreed.
12. In terms of the aspiration for the provision, parents/carers, professionals and providers identified the following features:
 - Structured 24 hour curriculum that meets the child's requirements
 - Structured support in day-to-day living /development of social skills, peer bonding, acceptance
 - Support with social activities, sport and hobbies

- Support with life learning skills
 - Small units rather than large complex
 - Spacious, safe and quiet location
 - Offer therapy services
 - Ad-hoc respite provision
 - Offer apprenticeships/ qualifications/ work opportunities
 - Link with mainstream and specialists schools /colleges
 - Links with the local community
 - Offer parents support groups
 - Offer outreach
13. Views on the group or groups that the provision should support:
- Children and young people with challenging behaviour
 - Children and young people with high functioning Autism and asperger's syndrome
 - Children and young people with severe learning difficulties (SLD)
 - Children and young people who are severely disabled / have complex needs
 - Ability to accommodate those with sensory difficulties and moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
14. Views on the age range that the provision should cater for varied, commencing from primary, secondary or post 16 and ending at age 18/19/20 or 25.

Capital

15. The property search is exploring: converting existing Oxfordshire County Council capital assets (ones that are proposed for decommissioning); building on land that Oxfordshire County Council owns; leasing or renting. The preferred option is to convert an existing property as this is likely to be the most cost efficient.
16. Assuming the use of an existing council building the estimated capital costs will be **£400,000**. (350m2 for eight-bed unit @ £1,000 per m2 = £350,000 , adding furniture, fittings and contingency = £400,000)

Business Case

17. Estimated costs are based on an eight bed residential provision linked to a special school and college for children and young people with ASC and SLD. This is a hypothetical model as further work is needed on the design and the actual service will be defined through formal consultation. The estimated savings are between **£480,000 to £720,000** per year. There are also potential long term savings to adult services through delivery of local educational solutions which support young people to increase independence skills. More detailed finance, including a social return on investment, will be drawn up when there are clear proposals for the provision and detailed specifications.

18. It is unlikely that the full impact of any saving will be made until 2013/14 rather than 2012/13 as proposed in the Business Strategy.
19. We are cognisant of the emerging agenda for the NHS and intend to ensure that we are able to engage other relevant stakeholders as the arrangements for PCT Clusters and GP Commissioning Consortia develop.

Next Steps

20. If the Cabinet agrees that there is enough evidence of the need for an ASC educational residential provision in Oxfordshire and that there is a sufficient business case to proceed with this project , then the Steering Group will plan and implement the next stages:
 - Stakeholder event (planned for May 13th)
 - Options appraisal of a small number of proposed models
 - Formal consultation on proposed models
 - Detailed specification of agreed model
 - Property identified and agreed
 - Detailed financial planning
 - Planning for tendering and commissioning and market testing.

RECOMMENDATION

21. **The Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **give agreement to proceed with proposals to develop an autism educational residential provision;**
 - (b) **request a detailed, costed proposal by July 2011. If the age range of the proposed provision extends beyond 18 then a joint CYPF and SCS paper will be required and a decision by both CYPF and SCS Cabinet Members.**

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Background Papers: Annex 1 Equality Impact Assessment
 Annex 2 Analysis of call for views

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