

Shared Services Joint Committee 19th January 2022

Report Title	Education Sensory Impairment Service Disaggregation- Change to timeline
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Executive Member	Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills NNC Cllr Fiona Baker, Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education WNC

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	None

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval of recommendations to re-profile the timeline of the Education - Sensory Impairment Service (SIS) disaggregation from April 2022 to September 2022

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Sensory Impairment Service (SIS) aims to raise the aspirations of children and young people (CYP) with hearing/vision impairment (ages 0-19yrs) by identifying and meeting their needs at an early stage and enabling progress within educational settings and the home. The service contributes to the multi-agency planning for CYP with special educational needs or disability (SEND). This specialist service aims to improve self-esteem and to promote independence and ensure access to the school curriculum.

- 2.2 It was agreed in the North Northamptonshire Blueprint that the service would not disaggregate prior to the formation of the unitary authorities – the recommendation was made due to the highly specialist nature of roles, maintenance of appropriate staffing levels (both generally and across geographical areas where demand is unpredictable, and to account for the disparity between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council) and to allow for contingency and overall team resilience. The Blueprint agreed for North Northamptonshire Council to host the service for 12 months.
- 2.3 This report sets out recommendations and seeks approval to re-profile the timeframes (set out in the Transformation Task and Finish Group proposed timeline) for the Education Sensory Impairment Service disaggregation to 22/23 for proposed implementation in September 2022 in line with the academic year.

3. Recommendations

That the Joint Committee (Shared Services)

- 3.1 Approve reprofiling the disaggregation of the Education Sensory Impairment Service to September 2022

Reason for recommendation

- a. To remove the significant risk associated with attempting to disaggregate at the present time and to allow for the work on delivery options required to be undertaken to ensure delivery of statutory services and ongoing service viability post-disaggregation.
- b. The timing of disaggregation was dependent upon funding decisions made by North and West Northamptonshire Schools Forums. The Schools' Forums have recently agreed mechanisms for funding the service at their respective meetings on 14th December (West) and 16th December (North) which now allows the work on delivery options to commence considering this decision.
- c. Disaggregation will be aligned to the academic rather than the financial year – to take place by September 2022.

- 3.2 Alternative options considered:

- Delivery this financial year (2021/22) would incur significant risk to the delivery of this statutory service – to continue with the current timeline is not a viable option.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 There are 68 staff in the Service delivering both statutory and non-statutory functions, many being highly specialised roles. The team currently work as one team on behalf of North and West Northamptonshire Councils, hosted in the North.

- 4.2 Data analysis carried out as part of an options assessment in July 2020 suggested that there is a much higher current demand of case workload present in West Northamptonshire Council than in North Northamptonshire Council (60/40). A split of the service would thus need to take into consideration this demand and review the previous years to see if there is any average trend that could be factored in for accuracy as one year alone will not be able to confidently define.
- 4.3 The total service cost (per annum) is £2.3m overall budget. Statutory services provision for the SEND Code of Practice 2015 are provided by the Service and the Service area conforms to the national guidance for teachers from Gov.uk.

5 Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Option 1 – to disaggregate on 31st March 2022
- 5.2 The future funding of the SIS service has been a subject of ongoing conversations with the service manager and users of the service. This could not be debated more fully until the recent North and West Northamptonshire Schools Forums on 14th December 2021(West) and 16th December 2021(North). Decisions at the meeting have been based on the findings of the recent consultation and knowledge of schools' government funding decisions; a review of options and recommendations for disaggregation were not possible before this point.
- 5.3 The Schools Forum were consulted on the mechanism by which the service would be funded. The impact is that the West want a fully funded service delivered in the same way as the current service, and the North expressed a preference to move to a traded model of delivery allowing them to look to the open market where they require support.
- 5.4 Hence now, with knowledge of the above, thorough, and focused discussions on the future of the service, including reviewing delivery options and economic viability can now begin in earnest in January 2022. This now leaves insufficient time to properly formulate proposals for disaggregation by 31st March 2022. To try to do so would incur significant risk to the service in terms of statutory provision.
- 5.5 It is important for the service to undertake an options assessment and confirm the approach to providing the Service before a recommendation is made.
- 5.6 Option 2 – disaggregate in September 2022
- 5.7 This option considers the budgetary decisions made by the schools and their referred funding model and alignment with the academic year. The Service is performing well as a joint team and there are no significant risks from continuing 'as is' in the interim.

6 Next steps

- 6.1 If the recommendation to reprofile disaggregation is approved, the work to review the operational options for disaggregation will begin in January 2022 with a view to disaggregate in September 2022.

7 Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 No expected change because of the recommendations in this report. Resource and financial implications will be fully considered as part of the future options appraisal and Impact Assessment.

7.2 Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 The Shared Service Joint Committee is responsible for “ensuring there are robust plans for any disaggregation of services and that there is a smooth transition to new service delivery arrangements”. They are also responsible for ensuring that statutory arrangements are in place for each Council.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1 Sensory Impairment Services assist schools to meet the needs of pupils with additional needs. The council currently funds these services, mainly from the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant, but also using the council’s general fund. While the council has the legal power to fund these services, the budget, and the duty to fund them sits with schools

7.4 Risk and Issues

- 7.4.1 The recommendations reduce the significant risk that would be incurred through attempting disaggregation by 31st March 2022

7.5 Consultation

- 7.5.1 No external consultation for the recommendation was required. Any consultation required in forming the recommended delivery options will be considered and articulated in the future impact assessment.

7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

- 7.6.1 Not required

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

- 7.7.1 Not required

7.8 Equality Impacts

- 7.8.1 At this point in the process, it is not possible to fully assess the actual impact on all protected characteristic groups. During development of and consultation

on options for disaggregation of services, the situation will be reviewed and as any impact becomes apparent, appropriate mitigating action will be taken (where this is possible). Standard Council HR policies and procedures will apply, and all of these have been equality impact assessed

7.9 Climate Impact

7.9.1 There are no climate impacts arising from the recommendations in this report. Any impact from options will be considered and articulated in the future impact assessment.

7.10 Community Impact

7.10.1 There are no community impacts arising from the recommendations in this report. Any impact from options will be considered and articulated in the future impact assessment

7.11 Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1 There are no impacts as a result of the recommendations. Any impact from options will be considered and articulated in the future impact assessment.

8 Background Papers

8.1 Schools Forum West and North decision/ minutes link to be added once published