



Children, Young People and Education

**Specialist Teaching and Learning Service
Options Appraisal**

Introduction

The options appraisal below summarises feedback in relation to four options for the future of STLS beyond the end of the current Service Level Agreement (SLA). Feedback was provided by key stakeholders during a series of workshops held for this purpose.

The stakeholder groups engaged in this process are:

- internal stakeholders (Council representatives from the Education and SEND Division of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate) who commission and fund the service,
- representatives from the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS), who are responsible for delivering the service, and
- representatives from mainstream Early Years settings and schools who are beneficiaries of the service.

In the workshops, options presented for feedback were:

- Option 1: Do nothing – the SLA and the service ends.
- Option 2: No change – the service continues to be funded as is through High Needs Funding (HNF)
- Option 3: The service becomes a traded service.
- Option 4: The service is funded by clusters of schools using High Needs Funding allocated to them for local decision making through the Localities model.

Options feedback

The summary below comprises feedback from all stakeholder groups. Statements referenced to do indicate a consensus across all groups but are a summary of different views from all groups. A more detailed report is available which describes feedback from individual stakeholder groups.

Options Appraisal

Option 1: Do nothing – the SLA and the service ends

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced financial pressure against High Needs Funding Budget • Financial advantage for KCC (caveated by some stakeholder groups as being a short term gain that is likely to see rising costs in the future due to negative impacts identified) 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for schools and settings would greatly reduce. • Reduction in level of inclusive practice within schools and settings. • Decrease in parental confidence in mainstream schools ability to support children with SEND. • Inability to demonstrate impact on Safety Valve and Accelerated Progress Plan outcomes. • Negative effect on mainstream staff in terms of staff morale and support. • Loss of multiagency working.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No benefits identified by schools, Early Years settings or STLS. • Supports move away from visiting expert model and towards a school led model of school improvement. • Aligns with proposals within the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion regarding school-to-school support. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise in number of EHCP request for assessment. • Rise in number of EHCP awarded. • Risk to achieving impact against Safety Valve and Accelerated Progress Plan outcomes. • Impact on mainstream staff, specifically related to loss of support. • Reduction of inclusive practice in schools. • Increasing negative behaviour of pupils. • Impact on delivery of Council priorities such as Autism Education Trust.

Option 2: No change – the service continues to be funded as is through High Needs Funding (HNF) under a further Service Level Agreement (SLA)

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables continuity of support for schools and Early Years settings. • Continuing development of inclusive practice within schools. • Supports parental confidence in ability of mainstream schools to support children with SEND. • Continuing delivery of multi-agency working. • Consistency of support for schools. • Continued delivery of Council priorities such as Autism Education Trust. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing cost of funding the service from High Needs Funding Budget. • Does not align to strategic direction of travel in terms of move away from visiting expert model and towards a school led model of school improvement. • Does not align with proposals within the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion regarding school-to-school support.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing of mainstream staff who receive support from the service. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk to the service is funding remains static. If funding is not increased, then the service will diminish over time. • Risk of pressure on the High Needs Funding block if funding continues or is increased. • Risk to other support funded through the High Needs Block is funding must be withdrawn from other areas to fund STLS.

Option 3: The service becomes a traded service.

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced financial pressure against High Needs Funding Budget. • Schools and Early Years settings can purchase bespoke support to meet their needs. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and Early Years settings may be unable to afford to purchase support through this model creating unequal access within districts and across the county. • Schools and Early Years settings will not be able to afford to purchase the service for every child that needs a specialist teacher allocated so that they can apply for SENIF or HNF. • Negative impact on inclusion where schools cannot purchase support. • Negative impact on quality of service without central oversight.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and Early Years settings can purchase bespoke support to meet their needs. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminished service over time. • Funding and budgets being insufficient to create a financially sustainable model. • Reduction in levels of inclusive practice within schools. • Increase in number of EHCP requests for assessment and awards. • Disproportionate impact on Early Years settings who are private, voluntary and independent organisations and may have less funding available to purchase support. • Impact on delivery of Council priorities such as Autism Education Trust.

Option 4: The service is funded by clusters of schools using High Needs Funding allocated to them for local decision making through the Localities model.

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools can access support that is bespoke to their needs. • Reducing pressure on the overall High Needs Funding budget as funding would come from the allowance provided to clusters of schools for decision making. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative impact on STLS Staff and service – staff may leave. • Inconsistency of service delivery across and within districts where some clusters may choose to fund the service and others do not. • Lack of financial stability for the service. • Negative impact on inclusive practice within schools. • Negative impact on levels of parental confidence in mainstream schools and settings.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localised support tailored to local issues. • Supports move away from visiting expert model and towards a school led model of school improvement. • Aligns with proposals within the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion regarding school-to-school support. • Enables greater local decision making. • Enables greater local accountability for spend on high needs funding. • Enables greater local accountability for inclusive practice. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and budgets being insufficient to create a financially sustainable model. • Reduction in levels of inclusive practice within schools and Early Years settings. • Level of service available diminishes over time. • Concerns regarding who is accountable for 'commissioning' and quality assuring the service at a local / cluster level. • Disproportionate impact on Early Years settings who are not funded through HNF budget and are therefore outside the scope of the Localities model and unable to access the allocated funding. • Impact on delivery of Council priorities such as Autism Education Trust.

Additional options identified.

Since the completion of the engagement process for the options appraisal, two alternate options have been identified. These are:

- Option 5: bring the service in house
- Option 6: transition option, extending the current SLA for one year to enable a transition to option 3 or 4.

Appraisals of these options are outlined below.

Option 5: bring the service in house

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater control for the Council in relation to the quality of the service and creation of a consistent countywide offer for schools and Early Years settings. • Ability to deploy the service creatively in response to emerging needs or crisis. • Retains workforce to deliver Council priorities, such as AET. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not align to strategic direction of travel in terms of move away from visiting expert model and towards a school led model of school improvement. • Does not align with proposals within the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion regarding school-to-school support.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of support for schools and Early Years settings. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminished service over time unless funding is increased. • Financial risk to High Needs Funding Budget.

Option 6: transition option, extending the current SLA for one year to enable a transition to Option 3 or 4.

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a 'buffer' zone, offering consistency of support while changes associated with implementing other options become embedded. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not align to the strategic direction of travel.
<p>Benefits</p>	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates additional uncertainty for the STLS workforce who may leave the service, impacting on capacity. • Financial risk to the High Needs Funding budget. • SLA holding schools may not want to accept the financial risk of signing an SLA for additional year with no additional funding.