

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

## DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Beverly Fordham, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

## DECISION NUMBER:

25/00085

**For publication** *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

## Key decision: YES

*Key decision criteria. The decision will:*

- a) *be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:*
- the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;*
  - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.*

**Subject Matter / Title of Decision:** Specialist Resource Provision Review and Commissioning Intentions

## Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- I. APPROVE the change in the model of support to children and young people with Vision Impairment from SRP provision, to being supported by the KCC Specialist team in their local mainstream school.
- II. APPROVE and adopt the a policy position not to commission places in SRPs with a designation of Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH).
- III. Confirm the policy position, that Secondary SRP places are commissioned for Years 7-11 only, with exceptions being considered on a case by case basis.
- IV. APPROVE the allocation of £20m of the High Needs Capital Grant to enable the delivery of an increase in commissioned SRP places, in line with the proposals set out in Tables 8c to 8f of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30.
- V. DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education to enter in to all and any necessary negotiations, consultations and contracts to commission the increase in SRP places set out in Tables 8c to 8f of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30, to change the designations of existing SRPs as set out in Table 8g of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30, and to decommission SRP provisions to implement the decisions set out at I. and II. above,
- VI. DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to issue public notices, and approve proposals on behalf of the Local Authority.
- VII. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education to approve capital expenditure on individual SRP proposals contained in Tables 8c to 8f of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2026-30 provided that the total capital expenditure remains within the agreed £20m, and in cases involving capital expenditure above £1m, such approval to be made in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.
- VIII. DELEGATE authority to the Director for Education and Special Educational Needs to enter into contracts and service level agreements (SLAs) with mainstream primary and secondary schools that provide either new or existing Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs), on behalf of Kent County Council under the current contract/SLA in place agreed under key decision 23/00128.

## **Reason(s) for decision:**

### **Background:**

The Department for Education (DfE) expects Local Authorities (LA) to manage their specialist estates efficiently to avoid detriment to schools' education offers, creating disadvantage to children and young people who have special educational needs (SEND), or the LA's financial position. This means ensuring the sustainability of maintained specialist school places that are appropriately matched to need-type, phases of education and geographical locations.

A review of Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs) identified pathway (primary to secondary), geographical and demand gaps in our current SRP structure. These gaps have led to children and young people in some areas of the County having to travel considerable distances to access appropriate specialist provision to meet their educational needs, some having to move into special schools when they transition from primary to secondary school due to a lack of secondary school SRP provision, and due to insufficient SRP capacity against demand in some areas and for some SEN need types, children and young people being placed in independent and non-maintained specialist provision at high cost.

All current SRPs, whether solely for VI or including VI within their designation are in East and South Kent. The low numbers of children and young people in provisions with VI as their designation as well as the location of current provisions only in the east and south of the County means that the viability and accessibility of these SRPs is an issue. The low numbers of children with VI requiring support from an SRP also prohibits expansion of similar provision across the County. As schools have become more inclusive, new accommodation is designed to be more accessible and with improvements in technology, increased numbers of children and young people with visual impairments are choosing to attend their local mainstream schools. These children are supported by the Qualified Teachers for Visual Impairment and other VI specialists from the KCC Specialist Teaching Services for Children and Young People with Sensory Impairment and/or Physical Disabilities: [Sensory Impairment in Mainstream Schools - KELSI](#) and [Physical Disability and Complex Medical Needs - KELSI](#). The Visual Impairment specialists in this team also support schools with SRPs for VI where there has been a gap in recruitment of a qualified teacher for VI.

### **Equality Implications:**

The review of SRPs was set up as a project under the Council's wider SEND Transformation Programme. The main recommendations from the review will expand provision to enable more children and young people to attend specialist provision in their locality, reducing travel distances and improving choice.

For young people with visual impairment who live in East and South Kent and are currently able to attend an SRP specifically for VI, they will still receive the full support required from a fully qualified teacher for visual impairment and receive support from suitably qualified specialist staff e.g. braillists. The proposed approach will ensure that all children and young people wherever they live in Kent have access to the same support as close to where they live as possible.

### **Financial Implications:**

Capital costs related to proposals to commission new SRPs and/or expand current SRPs to meet provision pathway and geographical gaps and meet growth in demand will be funded through KCC's High Needs Capital Grant allocations provided by the Department of Education (DfE). This capital grant is provided on an annual basis to support high needs provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities or requiring alternative provision. The grant can be used to either create new school places, improve existing facilities or/and support mainstream inclusion.

The Council commissions schools to provide the support and provision provided in an SRP on a day-to-day basis, normally by paying a pre-agreed rate per place. The Council funds the revenue

costs of SRP places from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, a specific ring-fenced revenue grant from the DfE.

The rate paid per place by the Council is currently under review and is subject to the implementation of a new funding model that is expected from September 2026. In addition, a revised contract/service level agreement is also expected to be introduced with school/Trusts running SRPs at the same time.

**Legal Implications:**

The requirements placed on a local authority are defined in the Education Act 1996 (as amended), Education and Skills Act 2008, Education and Inspections Act 2006, Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and the Equality Act 2010.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 KCC has a duty 'to support the child and his or her parent, or the young person, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help him or her achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes'. By ensuring we have appropriate provision as locally as possible, we are delivering on our obligation in accordance with this legislation.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

This decision will be considered at the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

The decision was taken to review SRPs under the wider SEND Transformation Programme. Kent's high Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, its commitment made to the DfE under Kent's Safety Valve agreement and its Accelerated Progress Plan all meant the option of 'do nothing' and not carrying out the review was not a viable option.

The option of continuing with the current approach to VI SRPs would not address the issues of lack of equity in provision, or viability of the current provisions.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

None

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signed

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date