

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - SEN UNITS REVIEW: LEAD SCHOOL PILOT EVALUATION REPORT

1. Introduction

In 2003 Cabinet agreed a review of SEN units and designations in Kent mainstream schools should be carried out to ensure equality of access to all children and young people to quality mainstream provision to meet their special educational needs.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the review were:

- To ensure the pattern, diversity and organization of provision reflects the changing needs of pupil population.
- To support schools in becoming more inclusive and accessible to all learners
- To reduce the long distances travelled by many children on a daily basis thus limiting stress for them and their families and reducing the expenditure on transport
- To ensure complementary provision to that available in special schools
- To ensure equity of access to support across the whole county by addressing gaps in provision, particular for children and young people with Autism
- To facilitate sharing of expertise and building capacity in all schools

3. Pilot Lead school model

The review recommended the development of pilot lead schools for each of the six need types - Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Hearing Impairment (HI), Physical difficulties (PD), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) or Visual Impairment (VI). In 2007 Members agreed to run a pilot in one part of the county and evaluate that before considering extending it across the county. It was agreed the pilot would commence in September 2008.

It was proposed that the lead school would provide a specialist service to the schools within a locality group of schools for a particular SEN need type.

The pilot lead school was to be:

- A specialist resource within a mainstream school for one of the 6 need types (ASD, HI, PD, SLCN, SpLD and VI), providing placements for children and young people within a defined geographical area.
- A resource to support the process of building the capacity of all mainstream schools, thus providing a wider and more equitable access to specialist services for children and young people
- An opportunity to facilitate children and young people attending their local school with their peers/friends and not having to travel long distances to school outside of their local community
- A resource to complement the work of special schools and be part of the continuum of provision and services within localities

Appropriate and agreed funding arrangements were put in place to support the Lead School pilot.

4. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the lead school pilot was largely qualitative. Information was collected as follows:

- Meetings in each locality with head teachers including special school head teachers, lead school teachers-in-charge, SEN coordinators, health therapists, specialists teachers, educational psychologists, SEN teams, Partnership Managers, parents/carers
- Questionnaires for school, professionals and parents/carers
- Lead school self-assessments surveys

In both 2009 and 2010 around 450 parent/carers whose child was in a SEN unit or was receiving VSCN funding were sent an invitations to meeting. All of the 1,651 parents and carers of children with a Statement of SEN and who lived in the pilot area were invited in writing to complete a questionnaire. Pilot lead schools completed self-assessment evaluations each year during 2008.2009 and 2010.

5. Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

A number of key financial issues were identified;

- Out-of-date school perceptions about funding entitlement
- Loss of access to VSCN funding
- Perceived insufficiency of outreach funding
- Erosion of automatic place-led funding entitlement

While there were a range of positives and negatives identified throughout the evaluation a number of main themes and conclusions emerged:

- The need for more clarity about the responsibilities, accountability and expectations of all mainstream schools in how they should deploy their delegated budgets to support all children and young people with special educational needs. This includes the need to have meaningful Disability Equality Schemes in place which set out clearly how they propose to meet the special educational needs and disabilities of children and young people
- One model does not fit all need types and there needs to be a continuum of provision available for each SEN dimension need type that includes, for some need types, specialist provision within mainstream schools
- The need for clarity in respect of outreach services to schools to support those children and young people whose needs are not severe and complex enough to require placement at, or intensive input from, specialist provision but who, nevertheless, need access to additional specialist support beyond that which the mainstream school itself is expected to provide
- The need to improve communication and consultation arrangements for working with parents and carers and children and young people

- The emphasis must be on prevention and criteria for access to services should support this policy and prevent a child or young person having to fail before they can secure that access.
- Any future changes for implementation must be allocated appropriate transition time and be underpinned by a comprehensive evaluation programme designed and agreed before implementation begins.

The findings and conclusions in this Executive Summary and the full Evaluation Report have informed the recommendations made in a Cabinet Report to be considered on 13 September 2010.

SEN UNITS REVIEW: LEAD SCHOOL PILOT EVALUATION REPORT

1. Introduction

In 2001 Cabinet agreed to carry out a review of Kent's special schools to ensure that the provision available reflected the increasing complexity and severity of special educational needs in Kent's population of children and young people. Cabinet then agreed in 2003 that a similar review of SEN units and designations in Kent mainstream schools was needed to ensure equality of access to all children and young people to quality mainstream provision to meet their special educational needs.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the review were:

- To ensure the pattern, diversity and organization of provision reflects the changing needs of pupil population.
- To support schools in becoming more inclusive and accessible to all learners
- To reduce the long distances travelled by many children on a daily basis thus limiting stress for them and their families and reducing the expenditure on transport
- To ensure complementary provision to that available in special schools
- To ensure equity of access to support across the whole county by addressing gaps in provision, particular for children and young people with Autism
- To facilitate sharing of expertise and building capacity in all schools

3. Context

When the review of units was agreed, Kent was maintaining a total of 7993 statements of SEN, of which there were 2837 children and young people attending special schools. There were 63 units of different need types within Kent mainstream schools Kent providing places for 938 children and young people.

Each unit attached to a mainstream school specialised in meeting a particular need type: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Hearing Impairment (HI), Physical difficulties (PD), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) or Visual Impairment (VI).

Of these 938 unit places, around 750 were filled. Of the remaining 4,218 children and young people with Statements, not in units or special schools, the majority were in mainstream schools being supported through the schools' delegated budgets and by the various specialist support and outreach services. For approximately 350 of them whose needs were very severe and complex, the school was receiving funding from a central pot under the Very Severe and Complex Needs (VSCN) Scheme, a budget top-sliced from the schools' delegated budgets. A small but significant percentage of the 4,218 were in Pupil Referral Units or receiving home tuition while a placement was being sought.

4. Pilot

A. Lead school model

The review recommended the development of lead schools for each of the six need types referred to above in section 3. The lead school would provide a specialist service to the schools within a defined cluster of schools or group of clusters. The recommendation as to which schools would become lead schools was made locally and subsequently agreed by members. With the exception of a few, all those with existing units agreed to be lead schools and, where there were gaps in provision, new lead schools were identified. A list of the lead schools with their specialism is attached at Annex 3.

The lead school was:

- A specialist resource within a mainstream school for one of the 6 need types (ASD, HI, PD, SLCN, SpLD and VI), providing placements for children and young people within a defined geographical area.
- A resource to support the process of building the capacity of all mainstream schools, thus providing a wider and more equitable access to specialist services for children and young people
- An opportunity to facilitate children and young people attending their local school with their peers/friends and not having to travel long distances to school outside of their local community
- A resource to complement the work of special schools and be part of the continuum of provision and services within localities

B. Phased Implementation

Members agreed in 2007 to run a pilot in one part of the county and evaluate that before rolling it out across the county. The pilot was known as Phase 1 and the rest of the County as Phase 2. It was agreed that the districts of Ashford, Shepway, Dartford and Gravesham and the Local Children's Services Partnership area of Swanley and District would form the geographical area of the pilot.

Within those areas there were 19 schools with 23 existing units which agreed to become lead schools and 9 which became new lead schools. 4 schools were lead school for more than one need-type. It was agreed the pilot would commence in September 2008.

C. Funding Arrangements

The budgets for units were calculated on a cost per place basis, with some need types attracting more funding per place than others. In addition, each unit received a lump sum to support the cost of a teacher. VI units received an additional lump sum of £10k. While new funding arrangements for lead schools were agreed to be piloted, units in Phase 2 schools still continued to have their budgets calculated in the same way.

Start-up funding of approximately £39k was delegated to each lead school to help support the development of the provision. Where a school was lead for more than one need type, it received funding for each of those need types. This lump sum was delegated in the Autumn of 2008. Lead school budgets, calculated under the new pilot arrangements, were delegated from April 2009.

With the exception of VI and HI need types, the pilot formula is made up of the following components: a fixed lump sum for each school, an amount per pupil based on the pupil population of the lead school catchment area, and a further amount per pupil population weighted for the need type. For VI and HI pupils, the funding continued to be based upon actual numbers.

It was proposed the transition to the new arrangements would take place over a 4 year period (subject to the evaluation and recommended changes). For new lead schools, their budget would gradually increase over that period until, in the fourth year, it was 100% of the full budget. For schools with existing units, a similar process would take place with the percentage of the budget paid under the new formula increasing each year, until it was 100% in the fourth year. This was underwritten with the proviso that the budget would not fall below the year one allocation if that was needed to protect pre-existing commitments. The first year transitional protection arrangements meant that, as a minimum, schools were funded for the children and young people already placed in the units plus a £15,000 allowance for developing the outreach support.

The funding pot for distribution to lead schools came from the budgets allocated for units under the 'old' arrangements together with the funding allocated for the Very Severe and Complex Needs (VSCN) Funding Scheme. The VSCN Scheme was to be phased out. This meant that in the pilot areas, there were no new applications for access to this Scheme considered. Where VSCN was already allocated to a school, it would remain in place until the child or young person left. At this point, the money would be added to the pot for distribution through the lead school formula. Annex 1 sets out the budget allocation details.

D. Complex Medical, Physical and/or Sensory Inclusion (CMSI) Funding

Although there was a proposal to cease VSCN funding within the pilot, a new scheme to meet very severe and complex needs associated with medical, physical and/or sensory impairments was tested. Among the children and young people in this group there is a very small number who need access to 2:1 support for a least 50% of the time they are in school, some needing it all of the time. The Complex Medical, Physical and/or Sensory Inclusion (CMSI) funding is to help mainstream schools support these children. It is not available for children with other need types in the way that VSCN funding was.

5. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the lead school pilot was largely qualitative. Information was collected as follows:

- Meetings in each locality with head teachers including special school head teachers, lead school teachers-in-charge, SEN coordinators, health therapists, specialists teachers, educational psychologists, SEN teams, Partnership Managers, parents/carers
- Questionnaires for school, professionals and parents/carers
- Lead school self-assessments surveys

At each meeting, attendees were given a presentation to update them on progress and this was followed by a discussion, question and answer session. Hard copy questionnaires were given out at meetings but the link to the questionnaire on the KCC website was also provided, together with the generic email address. All participants were also informed they could submit any views in a letter or by email.

6. Findings

A. Responses: Parents and Carers

The parent meetings were not well attended. In both 2009 and 2010 approximately 450 parent/carers whose child was in a unit or was receiving VSCN funding were sent an invitation but no more than 20 parents for each meeting confirmed they would be attending and, of those, only a handful turned up. In one case in NW Kent, only one parent attended.

All of the 1651 parents and carers whose child had a Statement of SEN and who lived in the pilot area were invited in writing to complete a questionnaire. As questionnaires were also made available on the Kent main website, they were, potentially, available to all those who visited the SEN Units Review page of the website. However, there were several parents who received letters who telephoned, as they had issues about SEN provision as it affected their child that they wanted to talk to someone about. This need to discuss concerns that were not specifically related to the lead school pilot was apparent in the questionnaires that were completed.

B. Responses: Schools and other professionals

There were some very robust, interesting and informative discussions at local meetings with the schools and professionals and they proved to be very useful in having an open and frank debate about SEN provision for children and young people. While very few from these groups completed questionnaires, there was a lot of feedback that helped inform the evaluation.

C. Questionnaire feedback

The following is a summary of the questionnaires completed and returned either in hard copy or electronically:

Group	Number of Questionnaires Returned	Comments
Parents/Carers	101	33 of these were from parents whose child had Autism but 17 of them were from parents whose child's needs were outside the remit of the lead school (their needs were associated with severe learning difficulties)
Schools primary	19	
Schools secondary	1	
Schools special	1	
Other professionals	2	One from a physiotherapist and one from a speech therapist

D. Findings

The detail of the feedback findings from all the parties is attached at Annex 4. This includes information collected through the self-assessment surveys completed by the lead schools in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

7. Key Financial Issues

These can be summarised as:

- Out-of-date school perceptions about funding entitlement
- Loss of access to VSCN funding
- Perceived insufficiency of outreach funding
- Erosion of automatic place-led funding entitlement

Annexes 1 and 2 provide data on Lead school and VSCN budgets.

A. Out of date school perceptions about funding entitlement

- i. At the heart of the financial issues raised during the pilot, and causing greatest concern and blockages to effective implementation, are schools' ingrained perceptions that the funding to support pupils' SEN should be additional to their 'basic' formula budget, and that it should rise (and fall) in direct proportion to the numbers of pupils they are expected to support, and be directly linked to actual costs of provision for each individual pupil. Aligned with this is a common view that SEN is the LAs responsibility and if the LA does not provide funding for a particular pupil, the school will not be able to meet their needs. Parents are also often given this view, leading to the pursuit of a statement as the only means of securing support, often elsewhere.
- ii. The new policy that underpinned the Lead School concept was built on the presumption that the vast majority of the funding available to support SEN was already in school budgets, both within the basic AWPU element and the various additional SEN/AEN proxy measures, and that the overall level of delegated funding was sufficient for all schools to meet almost all SEN, with some additional support or training from local 'centres of excellence', (the new Lead Schools). Pupils with needs beyond the scope of local provision would be in Special Schools, who would also supplement the expertise from the Lead Schools through their outreach role.
- iii. Although the pilot incorporated some relatively generous and 'gentle' transition arrangements to ease schools in the pilot area away from the former funding model (all existing unit pupil and VSCN funding was protected in full in the first year) schools immediately reacted to the "loss" of direct additional funding for new pupils. Extra unit places taken up were not automatically funded from September, and pupils in other schools that might formerly have qualified for VSCN were no longer eligible.
- iv. Schools saw these changes as reducing their SEN funding and capacity to support pupils, rather than strategically reviewing and realigning their whole school funding priorities. Schools with units in particular often overlook the basic AWPU funding and other proxy SEN funds at their disposal and see the separately identified unit allocation (or Lead School allocation) as their cash limit for spending on those pupils and outreach.

B. Loss of access to VSCN funding

- v. The ending of VSCN funding in the pilot area from September 2009 meant schools with new pupils with statements and a high level of SEN, which they considered would have met the previous VSCN criteria and brought additional funds to the school, no longer had access to those funds. Additional spending required (or inferred) by the statement was seen as an unreasonable burden on the school budget, and unfair because the formula budget calculation took no account of such changes in the demands placed on the school.

- vi. To make the situation worse, some schools with additional new pupils and no extra funding felt they were receiving no support from their lead school, despite those schools being funded for an outreach role. Others expected to receive a share of the Lead School's cash to replace the VSCN funds.

C. Perceived insufficiency of outreach funding

- vii. Lead schools' budgets were protected at a level at least equal to what would have been paid under the unit formula for existing pupils, plus an extra £15,000 to support the development of outreach. This was in addition to a one-off 'setting-up' grant of £39,000. Many Lead Schools received higher levels of funding than the minimum, where the new population-based formula produced a higher allowance.
- viii. To develop an effective outreach service, however, required schools to re-evaluate and restructure their approach to SEN provision and support, rather than see the £15,000 as the limit on their spending. There was a tendency to leave existing unit provision, organisation and staffing unchanged, rather than re-aligning the way that specialist staff were deployed.
- ix. The result was that other schools in the area felt the outreach support was insufficient or non-existent, and the Lead schools themselves still focused their attention and resources on just their own pupils.

D. Erosion of automatic place-led funding entitlement

- x. Former unit Lead Schools were accustomed to their budgets being revised twice a year to reflect actual numbers placed with them. The Lead School formula stopped this, albeit very gently in the first year with only new places not automatically recognised, and even then many Lead Schools had higher budgets anyway than under the former model.
- xi. This immediately led to increased resistance to the admission of additional pupils, or a demand for top-up funding to reflect those additional demands. Provision was claimed to be unsustainable without that extra funding. These Lead Schools had either never understood the basis of the new formula arrangement, or had never accepted it as fair or manageable.

8. Conclusions

While there are many things identified that were both positive and negative, there are some main themes that underpin them that help us arrive at some significant conclusions. In summary, there are four clear lessons that have been learned. These are:

- The need for more clarity about the responsibilities, accountability and expectations of all mainstream schools in how they should deploy their delegated budgets to support all children and young people with special educational needs, with specific regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.
- One model does not fit all need types and there needs to be a continuum of provision available for each SEN dimension need type that includes, for some need types, specialist provision within mainstream schools

- The need for clarity in respect of outreach services to schools to support those children and young people whose needs are not severe and complex enough to require placement at, or intensive input from, specialist provision but who, nevertheless, need access to additional specialist support beyond that which the mainstream school itself is expected to provide
- The need to improve communication and consultation arrangements for working with parents and carers, children and young people.

Overall the findings help us to come to a number of conclusions about future provision for children with special educational needs:

- There is a need for more clarity about the responsibilities, accountability and expectations of all mainstream schools in how they should deploy their delegated budgets to support all children and young people with special educational needs for all dimensions of need
- One model does not suit all need types and a continuum of provision needs to be available of which small specialist provisions within mainstream schools form a key strand for a small but significant number of children and young people with severe and complex needs, with fair and equitable access to these provisions across the County
- Resources need to be targeted to secure maximum outcomes for children and young and provide fair and equitable access to provisions across the County, including access to health therapies, while retaining robust measures for allocating and monitoring budgets
- There must be simplicity of process for access to resources
- There must be meaningful discussion, communication and consultation with parents/carers, schools and practitioners at all stages of provision and service development to ensure clarity, consistency, transparency and trust
- Parents and carers must have improved access to information and advice on a regular and frequent basis
- Mainstream schools need to have meaningful Disability Equality Schemes in place which set out clearly how they propose to meet the special educational needs and disabilities of children and young people
- The emphasis must be on prevention and criteria for access to services should support this policy and to prevent a child or young person having to fail before they can secure that access.
- There is a need for better co-ordination and integration of services and processes that support schools and families, ensuring that we make full use of all available resources in our special schools and secure optimum value for money
- Providing support to mainstream schools for children and young people with behavioral difficulties and severe learning difficulties must not be overlooked at the expense of other need types
- Any future changes for implementation must be allocated appropriate transition time and be underpinned by a comprehensive evaluation programme designed and agreed before implementation begins.

Annexes

- 1 County Summary - Budgets
- 2 Pilot Area Lead Schools Budgets
- 3 Phase One Lead Schools
- 4 Summary of Findings

ANNEX 1 to Units Review: Lead School Pilot Evaluation Report

Lead Schools, Units and VSCN		
County Summary 2010-11 budgets		
	no of FTE pupils	budget £000
<u>Pilot Area</u>		
Lead Schools - former units	251	3,105
New Lead Schools	n/a	652
budget additions*	20	161
Protected VSCN	88	913
sub total	356	4,831
<u>Non-Pilot Area</u>		
Units	563	5,632
VSCN initial budgets	306	3,228
VSCN in-year additions	144	1,488
contingency for September VSCN & units	80	800
Sub total	1093	11,148
COUNTY TOTAL	1,449	15,979
* budget additions agreed by Funding Forum for those Lead schools that have admitted pupils above assumed protection levels		

ANNEX 2 to Units Review: Lead School Pilot Evaluation Report

PILOT AREA LEAD SCHOOLS - 2010-11 BUDGETS				
DCSF No.	School Name	Need Type	FTE pupils	2010-11 Lead School budget
Former Units				£
3296	Langafel Church of England Primary School	AUT	15	240,517
6914	Longfield Academy	AUT	33	418,471
2470	Fleetdown Infant School	HI	6	229,238
2510	Cheriton Primary School	HI	8	114,052
3904	Castle Hill Primary School	HI	17	234,457
4632	Christ Church CofE Maths & Computer College	HI	11	102,242
3903	Raynehurst Primary School	PD	6	127,190
4632	Christ Church CofE Maths & Computer College	PD	8	96,074
5407	Thamesview School	PD	14	140,148
5458	Pent Valley School	PD	9	109,304
2075	York Road Junior School	SPL	35	296,364
2675	Linden Grove Primary School	SPL	20	157,205
3902	Hythe Bay Community School	SPL	18	154,292
4219	Hextable School	SPL	29	251,566
4246	The North School	SPLD	8	129,282
5458	Pent Valley School	SPLD	0	71,037
2568	Morehall Primary School	VI	4	67,916
3903	Raynehurst Primary School	VI	5	95,114
5458	Pent Valley School	VI	5	70,352
			251	3,104,821
New Lead Schools				
3349	Folkestone, St Mary's CofE Primary School	AUT		54,761
3909	Ashford Oaks Primary School	AUT		65,476
4246	The North School	AUT		57,958
5455	The Hayesbrook School	AUT		50,000
5466	Brockhill Park Performing Arts College	AUT		50,000
2686	Furley Park Primary School	PD		50,000
3148	Folkestone, Christ Church CofE Primary School	PD		50,000
4632	Christ Church CofE Maths & Computer College	SPL		125,833
3298	West Kingsdown CofE (VC) Primary School	SPLD		98,499
4204	Wilmington Enterprise College	SPLD		50,000
				652,527
TOTAL PILOT AREA				3,757,348

ANNEX 3 to Units Review: Lead School Pilot Evaluation Report

UNITS REVIEW – PHASE 1 LEADSCHOOLS

SCHOOL	Key Stage Phase	Need Type	Partnership Areas served
Ashford Oaks	Primary	ASD	Ashford One Ashford Rural
Brockhill Park Performing Arts College	Secondary	ASD	Shepway One Shepway Rural
Castle Hill Community Primary/Cheriton Primary	Primary	HI	Ashford One Ashford Rural Shepway One Shepway Rural Dover
Christ Church CE Primary	Primary	PD	Shepway One Shepway Rural
Christ Church CE Maths & Computer College	Secondary	PD	Ashford One Ashford Rural
Christ Church CE Maths & Computer College	Secondary	SLCN	Ashford One Ashford Rural Shepway One Shepway Rural
Christ Church CE Maths & Computer College	Secondary	HI	Ashford One Ashford Rural Shepway One Shepway Rural Dover
Dartford Grammar	Secondary	VI	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Fleetdown Infant & Junior	Primary	HI	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Furley Park Primary	Primary	PD	Ashford One Ashford Rural
Hextable	Secondary	SLCN	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Hythe Bay CE Primary	Primary	SLCN	Shepway One Shepway Rural
Langafel CE Primary	Primary	ASD	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Leigh Technology Academy	Secondary	HI	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Linden Grove Primary	Primary	SLCN	Ashford One Ashford Rural

SCHOOL	Key Stage Phase	Need Type	Partnership Areas Served
Longfield Academy	Secondary	ASD	Dartford East Dartford West Swanley & District
Morehall Primary	Primary	VI	Ashford One Ashford Rural Shepway One Shepway Rural Dover
The North	Secondary	ASD	Ashford One Ashford Rural
The North	Primary/Secondary	SpLD	Ashford One Ashford Rural
Pent Valley Technology College	Secondary	VI	Ashford One Ashford Rural Shepway One Shepway Rural Dover
Pent Valley Technology College	Secondary	PD	Shepway One Shepway Rural
Pent Valley Technology College	Primary/Secondary	SpLD	Shepway One Shepway Rural
St Mary's CE Primary	Primary	ASD	Shepway One Shepway Rural
Thamesview	Secondary	PD	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
West Kingsdown CE Primary	Primary	SpLD	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Wilmington Enterprise College	Secondary	SpLD	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
York Road Junior & Language Unit	Primary	SLCN	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Meopham Nick Hornby Centre	Secondary	ASD	Gravesham
Raynehurst Primary School	Primary	VI	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Raynehurst Primary School	Primary	PD	Dartford East Dartford West Gravesham Swanley & District
Hayesbrook School	Secondary	ASD	Tonbridge

ANNEX 4 to Units Review: Lead School Pilot Evaluation Report

LEAD SCHOOL PILOT (PHASE 1): SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Introduction

These findings represent the views and opinions of all parties and have not been subject to any weighting or selective process.

2. Findings

(A) Feedback from parents/carers

Issues not specific to the lead school pilot

There were certain themes that ran through the feedback from many parents and carers that were not unique to the Lead School pilot but which concerned SEN provision and services generally. Whilst not specific to the Lead School, these issues are nonetheless very significant in terms of how we support children, young people and their families. The issues raised under this category of feedback were:

- Insufficient therapy in all types of schools across the county
- Not enough funding available through schools
- Not enough 1:1 available for children and young people
- Not enough awareness in schools of the needs of SEN children and young people
- Too many schools which spend their budget inappropriately and do not prioritise children and young people with SEN
- Not enough advice and information for parents, not just from the LA but from schools
- Not enough support for children with severe learning difficulties and behavioural difficulties, need types for which there are no specialist provisions in mainstream schools

What parents and carers liked about lead school model

There were aspects of the lead school concept that parents and carers liked. The views expressed were as follows:

- They would like their child to be able to attend school more locally and not have to travel long distances to school
- Better knowledge and expertise in all schools would help children and young people with SEN who did not have statements
- Being with peers in a mainstream school would provide much needed positive role models – this was particularly commented on by parents and carers of children and young people with behavioural difficulties, a need type that is not included in the lead school model
- There are non-unit and non-lead mainstream schools across the county which are able to meet children and young people's needs very well – one parent with a child with autism actually rated the mainstream school her child attended better than the special school he subsequently attended
- Mainstream schools would work better if staff had more training

- Following 2 years in a unit, one parent's child was able to make excellent progress and successfully transfer to mainstream school – this view supports both units and mainstream schools
- The concept of the lead school is good in principle although it was felt that sharing knowledge is often very difficult for people
- Concentrating resources in one place means there is less available to support other children not part of that resource. In contrast, the lead school concept attempts to ensure all children have access to the benefit of that resource
- The lead school concept worked better for primary schools which were more often able to meet the severe and complex needs of children but the situation was often different at secondary school where they were expected to be more independent and/or share support much more

What parents and carers did not like about the lead school model

On the negative side, the following were the views of parents and carers who did not like the lead school model:

- Children and young people with severe and complex needs should be with peers who have similar difficulties and where they can have access to the protection and expertise of a unit/specialist resource.
- Inclusion in mainstream schools for a child or young person with severe and/or complex special needs does not work and they are often left on their own with very little support as the teacher has too many children to take care of
- A child or young person in a mainstream classroom often feels isolated and can develop a fear of attending school
- There is general lack of confidence in many schools being able to meet the needs of children and young people
- Children and young people with SEN in mainstream schools are more at risk of being bullied
- There is still a lack of clarity about what a lead school's role is
- There is not sufficient therapy to allow for it to be available across many schools and a lot of time will be taken up with therapists travelling to a number of schools
- There was not enough time given to really establish the role of the lead school
- There was not sufficient funding available to make the Lead School model work

(B) Feedback from schools

What schools liked about the lead school model

Consultations with schools revealed the following positive views:

- Schools acknowledge that they need access to specialist outreach services for some need types and/or some individual children/young people
- Schools who believed they had a reputation for being good at meeting SEN felt they were unfairly required to admit more SEN children, while other schools were able to refuse to admit them on the grounds they did not have the expertise. The idea of raising the overall capacity of schools across all localities to meet need was, therefore, a good idea
- The legal requirement on schools to have a Disability Equality Scheme in place to set out what they are doing to ensure that they comply with disability discrimination legislation could be supported by the concept of having specialist outreach services that help schools deliver their Schemes

- Lead schools that had not previously had units felt, as a general rule, that the idea of all schools sharing responsibility for providing places for children with severe and complex needs, with support from the lead school, was fair and appropriate
- Opportunity for practitioners and schools to work together to jointly plan and deliver services to children
- The creation of a whole-school approach to meeting needs from which all children benefit
- Shared ownership and responsibility for meeting children's needs
- The skilling up of staff in a number of schools for the benefit of a great many more children
- Supporting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act to ensure equality of access to provision and services

What schools did not like about the lead school model

The negative feedback from schools was as follows:

- Lack of real clarity about the lead school role
- No spare capacity in lead schools to deliver outreach due to existing units having to use their budget for children and young people already in the units and new lead schools having to take time to develop their outreach services
- The apparent lack of co-ordination between the various outreach/support services
- The lead school concept did not sufficiently recognise the extent to which some children, particularly those with Autism and those with speech and language needs, require access to more 'exclusive' provision.
- Coupled with this view was the view that economies of scale could be achieved by concentrating support in a specially resourced schools rather than spreading it across a number of schools
- Likewise, given there is a general overall shortage of therapy in schools, the consequent need to spread available therapy across all schools would create a substantial obstacle to improving access for those who have the highest priority need
- For some children, access to a specialist resource for an appropriate period of time could provide an effective way of preparing a child or young person for subsequent transfer to their local mainstream school – this ability to successfully transfer would be a measure of success
- The general principle of a school with a specialism supporting other mainstream schools was commended but developing this service and ensuring the availability of funding was likely to require an extensive period of transition
- While having access to expertise from the lead school was regarded as helpful, schools also wanted access to 1:1 support for pupils which was not the intention of the lead school model, except perhaps in some exceptional cases
- Schools were unhappy that the control of lead school budgets (through delegation arrangements) was in the hands of the lead school and that this was leaving other school budgets to pick up the cost of meeting an increasing complexity of SEN.
- Schools did not like the withdrawal of the very severe and complex needs funding - they appreciated, however, that additional funding for severe and complex needs would have to be top-sliced from the overall school budget
- The arrangements for access to lead school support are bureaucratic and time-consuming
- Lead schools as a group felt that there was too much responsibility placed on them to meet the needs of all children in the schools in their catchment area rather than on the schools where the children were actually on roll – they did, however, acknowledge their role as providers of outreach

(C) Feedback from other professionals

Again, as with other groups, practitioners who work with and support schools were consulted through local meetings and were invited to complete and return questionnaires. By and large the feedback from this group was similar to that of schools.

What professionals liked about the lead school model

The positive views expressed were as follows:

- A small, but significant, number of schools do not prioritise the needs of children with SEN and there are big differences between this group and other schools in their whole approach to supporting children with SEN. Providing outreach would benefit all children and young people, including ones without statements of SEN
- There are probably some children admitted to units who do not actually need them and this is a waste of a valuable resource if they are used in this way when mainstream is appropriate. This takes places away from children who really need them
- The existence of units as a solution for all children with SEN can help sustain a culture where preventative measures and early intervention are not given a high priority
- Where children need interventions delivered by school staff rather than one-to-one therapy, some schools still expect the therapists to deliver the support. The concept of skilling up schools to support children using specialist outreach services would help change this culture
- The increased opportunity for practitioners and schools to work together to jointly plan and deliver services to children
- The creation of a whole-school approach to meeting needs from which all children benefit
- Shared ownership and responsibility for meeting children's needs
- The skilling up of staff in a number of schools for the benefit of a great many more children
- Supporting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act to ensure equality of access to provision and services

The following negative views were expressed:

- The delegation of funding to lead schools put them in control of the budget and this was not helpful when the budget was intended to be used to support other schools in the catchment area
- There is a small group of children, mostly with Autism and speech and language difficulties, for whom something more specialist is required within the environment of a mainstream school so that they can have frequent and regular access to specialist interventions to enable appropriate curriculum access and appropriate progress
- At the moment there is insufficient therapy of all types available across the County but, if there were more children with severe and complex needs being supported in all mainstream schools, it would spread the available therapy more thinly and mean that therapists would spend a lot of time travelling from school to school
- There is currently not enough inter-agency collaboration to appropriately support all children

(D) Feedback from the SEN and Resources Unit

According to the obligations of SEN legislation the LA is responsible for assessing the special educational needs of those children and young people who 'belong' to Kent to determine if it is necessary to issue a Statement of SEN and, if one is issued, to arrange appropriate provision and keep it under review. This statutory process is managed on behalf of the LA by the SEN and Resources Unit (SEN and R). SEN and R has got to manage and balance the needs, expectations and demands of all the various parties, including schools, practitioners and parents/carers and this presents challenges at the best of times. There were particular and additional challenges during the period of the pilot.

Naming Schools in Statements of SEN

The SEN legislation on naming schools in Statements and on complying with parental preference is set out in Schedule 27 to the Education Act 1996. Briefly, the legislation says the LA must comply with parental preference unless the school is unsuitable and/or is not an efficient use of resources and/or is incompatible with the education of the other children with whom the child would be educated. Generally the efficient use of resources comes down to transport costs; hence, the LA names the *closest* school that can *meet the child's needs*. This means, if we want to name the school that is closest to the child's home, we have to be satisfied that it can meet the child's needs.

It was difficult to arrange mainstream placements when the outreach from the lead school to support those placements was not available and/or developed. Opposition came from several sources: the school where it was proposed to place the child which said it could not meet the child's needs, from the lead school on the grounds that it could not provide outreach, and from the parent who had no confidence the school could meet their child's needs.

The Lead School Model

The funding arrangements for the lead school were not calculated on a per place basis in the way units were funded. However, parents continued to seek places in the lead schools and these parents represented a mixture of those whose child might otherwise have been considered for a unit place and those whose child's needs could be met in a mainstream school.

Lead schools were at risk of being over-subscribed and, if parents offered to fund transport, it would prove difficult to refuse under Schedule 27 but, at the same time, difficult to expect the lead school to admit all these children. Without the previous funding and placement arrangements associated with units, all of the lead school funding would have been used to support admissions, thus threatening even further the potential to deliver outreach.