



Report title: School SEN Hubs Expansion and Primary Mainstream Update

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Tuesday, 29 August 2023

Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Public or private: Part exempt. Public Report / Private Appendix 1

Key Decision?: Y, is likely to lead to significant expenditure or savings within a service area, or one that is likely to have a significant impact on the life of a community within the Borough.

Published on the Forward Plan: Y

1. Report summary

- 1.1 The report outlines the development of series of Special School hubs (normally referred to as Resourced Provision or SEN units). These will be Special Educational Needs, SEN, places provided in hubs within or adjoined to mainstream schools. The report seeks approval for capital spend to provide accommodation for the hubs and also seeks approval to begin an informal consultation across mainstream schools to seek further SEN hub opportunities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Approve spending of £6m which includes £3m allocated from the DfE High Needs Capital funding, and £3m allocated from the DfE Basic Need funding as detailed in appendix 1.
- 2.2 Approve an informal consultation with Schools (Head teachers and Governing Boards) to seek partnerships to open further SEN hubs.
- 2.3 Authorise, subject to the approval of recommendation 1, the Director for Children's Services to invite and evaluate tenders for the projects described in this report and enter into the appropriate contracts and incidental and ancillary documentation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director Legal & Governance, as per the Council's Constitution.

- 2.4 Authorise the Council's Section 151 officer to allocate and vire funding to Children's Services to support the programme.

3. Reason for recommendation

- 3.1 Since the start in the rise of pupil numbers in Primary schools, and now the continuing rises in Secondary schools, Rochdale has had an approximate 30% increase in its mainstream pupil numbers.
- 3.2 Rochdale Special Schools were expanded in 2015/16 with an increase of less than 10% in the number of additional places. Three out of four of the Rochdale Special schools are co-located with mainstream provision and are managed under PFI contracts. These two issues mean that further expansions are neither cost-effective nor possible because of constrained sites. Rochdale has 39% of its SEN pupils in Special School provision compared to 40% in England and 44% across Greater Manchester (2021 DfE data).
- 3.3 As of 2021 DfE data, Rochdale had less than 1.5% of its SEN pupils in SEN hubs in mainstream schools. This compares to an England average of 6.5% and North-west region average of 5.3%.
- 3.4 Both the total number of pupils in schools and the percentage of SEN pupils with Education and Health Care Plans, EHCPs, has risen. In 2022/23 Rochdale had 4.7% of its pupils with EHCPs, compared to a rate of 4.3% across England.
- 3.5 As a consequence of rising numbers of pupils with EHCPs, mainstream schools in Rochdale have had rising numbers of children with complex SEN needs for some years. Rochdale also has rising numbers of pupils that are taking up SEN places in the expensive independent SEN sector. The SEN budget has a rising deficit and the rising number of pupils in the independent sector is a growing percentage of this deficit.
- 3.6 The aim of the SEN hub project is to increase the number of pupils in specialist places within the borough. In hubs, attached to mainstream schools, pupils will be able to share some elements of mainstream school and be part of their community, while accessing specialist places with supporting SEN therapies such as speech and language therapy.
- 3.7 The 'Raising Rochdale' strategy was co-produced with stakeholders across Rochdale and the programme was coordinated by the Council for Disabled Children. One of the 'Spotlight' outcomes was:-
*"Children stay close to home (i.e. educated in and live in Rochdale).
WHY?
When children remain close to their home family and community, we can support them, build resilience and help them to achieve positive outcomes in adulthood)."*
This SEN hubs Expansion programme is to enact the strategy and to enable more children to stay close to home.
- 3.8 Rochdale is in a DfE designated Priority Education Investment Area and has been in the tranche 2 of the Developing Better Value (DBV) in SEND DfE programme. Development of a variety of specialist SEN hubs in mainstream is

important for families with SEN pupils to allow their children to attend schools within the borough and it is a key part of the DBV programme. Also, as approved in the June 2023 Cabinet, the current Education Sufficiency Strategy includes the development of SEN hubs to create sufficient SEN places moving forward.

- 3.9 Rochdale was awarded a new SEN school in the DfE 2019 Wave. The school will be a Secondary and Tertiary school for age 11 to 19 and will specialise in provision for children and young people with Autism. The LA is still awaiting the submission of the planning permission for the school and the current estimated opening date is 2025.
- 3.10 The SEN hub programme as detailed in Key Information in Section 5 below will create a total of 106 Primary SEN places and 60 Secondary SEN places across the borough by September 2025.

4. Alternatives considered

- 4.1 Every child with an Education and Health Care Plan has a bespoke plan that aims to deliver the best education outcomes for that child. As part of that process the local authority is required to meet the needs of the child through providing the most appropriate education placement. The current system sees many of these children being placed in educational settings out of borough in independent settings. While these placements aim to meet the immediate need, they do not meet the social need of families to bring their children up with good links to their local communities.

5. Key information

- 5.1 The initial aim of the SEN hub programme would be the provision of 106 Primary hub places and 60 Secondary hub places, by September 2025.
 - 5.1.1 Phase 1 of the programme will see 3 Primary hubs open this September, with Phase 2 capital funding sought in this report needed to create the permanent accommodation in those schools for September 2024.
 - 5.1.2 Phase 1b - Primary: will open a new Primary hub potentially during the 2023 autumn term with a possible Phase 2 accommodation built for September 2024.
 - 5.1.3 Phase 1b - Secondary: One Secondary hub will open this September in temporary accommodation for 2023 and 2024, and Phase 2 will include commissioning the works to create permanent SEN building for intake in September 2025.
 - 5.1.4 **Funding requested for these elements is £3.25m, see appendix 1 for details.**
- 5.2 Phase 3 would be the launch of an informal consultation in with all schools to seek partners for 2 additional Primary hubs, 2 additional Secondary hubs and 2 Primary intervention units.
 - 5.2.1 The intervention units would be council run short break units for intensive work with children without EHCPs with the aim of putting in the support needed while pupils were still at SEN support. A particular need currently is speech, language and communications support at key stage 1 (ages 4-6 years).

5.2.2 Funding required for these elements is £2.75m, see appendix 1 for details.

6. Finance

6.1 This report seeks approval for funding for building works only, through the allocated capital grants from the DfE. Because the SEN hubs will accommodate additional pupils Basic Need allocation of funds for new school places currently held of £3m will be required. In the last few years the DfE have also given out grants for High Needs Capital and £3m of the currently held funds will be required.

7. Legal

7.1 Under the Education Act 1996, section 14(1) the Local Authority has a duty to secure sufficient school places and is also the strategic commissioner for new school places in its area.

7.2 A local authority shall exercise their functions under this legislation to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary education, and secondary education and, in the case of a local authority in England, further education, are available to meet the needs of the population of their area.

8. Human resource

8.1 Two scenarios for any additional staff funded through school's revenue (High Needs Block and Dedicated School's Grant) include funding to schools and academies to undertake to directly employ additional staff, or through posts to support SEN pupils within Rochdale Additional Needs service. Such staff will be employed under current schools/academy's or council's standard contracts.

9. Sustainability impact

Results Table: Sustainable Development Goals Assessment			
Sustainable Development Goals	Impact Ratings		Comments, Actions and Mitigations
SDG 1	No Poverty	G	Project will reduce significantly travelling times and costs or vulnerable families with SEN children
SDG 2	Zero Hunger		
SDG 3	Health & Wellbeing	G	Project will reduce significantly travelling times and costs or vulnerable families with SEN children
SDG 4	Quality Education	G	Project will improve education outcomes as more SEN children will be learning in their local schools
SDG 5	Gender Equality	G	Project will improve education outcomes as more SEN children will be learning in their

			local schools who abide by Rochdale behaviours and values
SDG 6	Clean Water & Sanitation		
SDG 7	Affordable & Clean Energy	G	Reduction in vehicular travel will be an outcome
SDG 8	Decent Work & Economic Growth	G	SEN children transitioning into adulthood will be integrated into their local work places
SDG 9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure		
SDG 10	Reduced Inequalities	G	Project will improve education outcomes as more SEN children will be learning in their local schools who abide by Rochdale behaviours and values
SDG 11	Sustainable Cities & Communities		
SDG 12	Responsible Consumption & Production		
SDG 13	Climate Action		
SDG 14	Life Below Water		
SDG 15	Life On Land		
SDG 16	Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions		
SDG 17	Partnerships For The Goals		

10. Other considerations (corporate priorities, risks)

- 10.1 The SEN hub programme will work towards the aims of the SEN deficit reduction strategy.
- 10.2 There is some risk on delivery times, as with all building projects and the SEN team will work with partner schools to facilitate and mitigate the SEN places as needed. Discussions will continue to take place with schools through this coming year to manage expectations on all sides.

10.3 Equalities Impact Assessment

This SDG is about reducing inequality within and among countries			
SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities			
What is the impact of this proposal for different groups? Consider these elements: 1. Discrimination, 2. Advancing equality of opportunity and 3. Fostering good relations	Impact Rating	RAG Result	Comments
Age	Positive	G	Positive outcomes from this project would be improvements in day to day living of families with SEN children, which are currently travelling 2+ hours a day for their education.
Disability	Positive	G	SEN children and families will benefit
Gender reassignment or Transgender people	Neutral		
Marriage & civil partnership	Neutral		
Pregnancy & maternity	Neutral		
Race	Neutral		
Religion or belief	Neutral		
Sex	Neutral		
Sexual orientation	Neutral		
Carers	Positive	G	Positive outcomes from this project would be improvements in day to day living of carers with SEN children, which are currently travelling 2+ hours a day for their education.
Serving or ex serving armed forces	Neutral		

	Overall RAG	G	

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