

Meeting date: 22nd February 2021
Report to: Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children,
Education & Skills
**Subject/report
title:** Alternative Provision for secondary age pupils.
Report from: Director of Children's Services and Skills
**Report
author/lead
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Wards affected:

All Wards

**Public/private
report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue
of paragraph:** N/A

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Cabinet Member on developments relating to Alternative Provision for secondary age students and seek approval to support an innovative proposal from Solihull Academy on how the local authority meets its statutory duty for provision immediately following the exclusion of a secondary age pupil, known as "Sixth day provision.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1 Endorse the proposal from Solihull Academy (Alternative Provision Free School) to extend their age range and develop a dedicated Intervention and Assessment Centre for vulnerable secondary age students from September 2021.
- 2.2 Authorise officers to work with corporate colleagues to identify and secure appropriate premises to accommodate the new provision.
- 2.3 Agree in principle to commission 20 FTE places at the newly established 6th day provision.
- 2.4 Note the ongoing development of an Alternative Provision Strategy which will include an evaluation of future alternative provision place requirements.

3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory responsibility to make provision from the 6th day for students who have been permanently excluded.
- 3.2 In February 2020, Cabinet Member received a report discussing options for alternative provision for secondary age children who are disaffected with education including those children that have been permanently excluded from school. Arising from that report, officers were authorised to explore the development of a new short-stay intervention and assessment provision for Solihull pupils that have been permanently excluded. Since this time officers have been exploring a range of options and have entered into dialogue with Solihull Academy about the potential of establishing such a provision.
- 3.3 Solihull Academy is an Alternative Provision Free school established in April 2018 to make provision for young people age 13 – 16. It caters for pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion. In consultation with the Local Authority, Solihull Academy have drawn up a proposal to extend their age range to include all secondary pupils age 11 - 16 and create a satellite provision to offer short term (20 week) placements for Solihull students from the 6th day following a permanent exclusion.
- 3.4 Over time, it is expected that this offer could be extended to other students out of school (up to a maximum of 20).
- 3.5 The maximum number of places available in the main school will increase from 110 to 130 places, which will be available for schools, or the Council to commission. The assessment centre will provide a further 20 FTE places, a total of 150 places across the whole Academy.
- 3.6 Approval of this proposal is a matter for the Regional Schools Commissioner, who will consider a business case submitted by the Academy.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 This initial proposal will create a provision within which the individual needs of permanently excluded and other vulnerable students can be quickly and robustly assessed to inform their supported transition into other provision appropriate to their needs – at the same time as enabling the council to meet its statutory duty to provide education for excluded secondary aged pupils from the 6th day.
- 4.2 The emerging Alternative Provision Strategy will provide a baseline within which to take forward associated alternative provision proposals.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 The future alternative provision needs of the children and young people in Solihull is presently under review and an Alternative Provision Strategy is being developed which will ensure we remain responsive to changing patterns of identified need, and sit alongside the existing School Place Planning and Commissioning document. This strategy will address the provision needs and gaps, and set out a coherent alternative

provision offer across Solihull.

- 5.2 The most pressing need is to shift the focus away from a provision to house permanently excluded students to a system-wide approach where resources, services and provisions are realigned to focus on the individual needs of students at an earlier stage. Early identification of need, rapid and appropriate intervention, and secure, outcome focussed transition planning should be a fundamental expectation for all Solihull children who are at risk of becoming disconnected from education.
- 5.3 The proposed Solihull Academy Intervention and Assessment Centre offer will provide 20 short term (up to 20 weeks) placements for secondary age Solihull students who would otherwise be out of education. Priority will be given to Solihull students who have been permanently excluded, or who have no school place and need additional support to access education. Where capacity allows, schools may refer students for a period of intervention to avoid permanent exclusion.
- 5.4 In order to improve outcomes and opportunities for vulnerable children, it is clear from analysing the individual educational journey of students who have been permanently excluded, that we must act quickly to carefully assess their needs and immediately begin planning, alongside the student, their transition to their next provision. This will be a core function of the Intervention & Assessment Centre. It is expected that these students will transition into a mix of mainstream, alternative and special provisions. This remit is fundamentally different to any provision currently available within the borough.
- 5.5 The emerging Alternative Provision Strategy will set out the medium and long term requirements in term of numbers and range of provisions. Any identified increase in need for special school places will feed into the Special Schools Commissioning Strategy. It is expected that in order to meet the needs of this group of students there is a requirement to extend the range of available provisions.
- 5.6 Development of 'in-house' specialist provision is a key strand within the High Needs Block Recovery Plan for managing the increase in demand for specialist provision within the constraints of the high needs grant received by the Council. Without the creation of additional provision, the council will continue to rely on high cost independent provision located outside of Solihull, putting further strain on both the high needs and transport budgets. The focus on careful assessment and routing to suitable provision after 20 weeks should ensure pupils are more appropriately placed, and this should reduce costs over time. The cost of an out of borough placement is approximately double that of in borough provision.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Revitalising our towns and local centres.2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2.	<p>These proposals seek to create additional specialist intervention and assessment places to better meet the needs of pupils and improving there opportunities and outcomes beyond school age. A stronger alternative provision offer will support young people's</p>

<p>3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing.</p>	<p>access to growing local employment opportunities.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <p>4. Enhance Solihull's natural environment. 5. Improve Solihull's air quality. 6. Reduce Solihull's net carbon emissions.</p>	<p>Rapid intervention and assessment will provide more supported opportunities for excluded students to be reintegrated back into a local school. A wider range of local alternative provision options will reduce the numbers of pupils needing to travel out of Solihull.</p>
<p>People and Communities:</p> <p>7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities. 8. Enable communities to thrive. 9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs.</p>	<p>Increasing the focus of individual student needs will begin to address the inequalities as young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, are significantly over represented in those students permanently excluded, or disaffected from school. Solihull will offer high quality alternative provision options, close to home, for some of our most vulnerable pupils. These proposals will lead to more cost effective method of provision delivery, as it is expected to lead to a reduction in the number of young people requiring high cost independent provision outside of Solihull.</p>

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 Solihull Academy are undertaking a consultation, supported by the Local Authority to extend the age range of students for whom they can make provision, and develop an Intervention and Assessment Centre. This will inform a Business Case submitted to the Regional Schools Commissioner and if approved is expected to commence in September 2021.

6.2.2 Further reports will be brought to Cabinet Member and appropriate consultations will be undertaken as the broader Alternative Provision Strategy is developed.

6.2.3 In the Autumn Scrutiny received a report on Exclusions, EHE and children missing education.

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 **Revenue** – The revenue costs will be developed through a commissioning conversation annually and funded at a level of standard AP lump sum £10,000 plus an agreed top up, estimated to be a maximum of £20k per place per year. The level of

top-up will be subject to an annual commissioning conversation and agreement with Solihull Academy and is, as yet, to be finalised. This will be funded from the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG), and will be treated as a “spend to save” in the short term, whilst savings from appropriate placements are identified over the longer term

6.4 Capital –

6.4.1 Work is ongoing to identify a suitable site to house the new Intervention and assessment Centre. The capital requirement for modification and refurbishment of any identified site will be met from the Children’s Services Capital Programme..

6.5 Legal implications:

6.5.1 Requests to add additional provision and change the age range of Solihull Academy is subject to agreement by the Regional Schools Commissioner, who will seek a view from the Local Authority as to the need for places. The change is also subject to consultation, by the Academy, which is currently under way. The Regional Schools Commissioner will also take into account the outcome of this consultation, before making a decision.

6.5.2 Officers are satisfied that the consultation requirements have been met by Solihull Academy.

6.6 Risk implications:

6.6.1 One of the key risks is that the new provision cannot be in place in time for a September 2021 start. This will be considered in detail in the Alternative Provision Strategy, and proposals adjusted where necessary.

6.7 Equality implications:

6.7.1 These proposals seek to enhance the educational offer available in Solihull for some of the most vulnerable students, often from disadvantage background, who are at the greatest risk from disengaging from education and seeks to support wider inclusion for all pupils by offering a broader range of educational services and provision.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 Cabinet Member Report 11th February 2020 : Future Options for Alternative Provision.

9. List of other relevant documents