

Name of proposal/policy	Sensory Impairment Service Review	Budget number (if applicable)	n/a
Service area responsible	Children Families & Education	Cabinet meeting date	
Name of completing officer	Anne Wakeling	Date EqIA created	09/01/2017 Updated 30 th June 2017
Approved by Director / Assistant Director	Alison Shipley	Date of approval	3 April 2017 Approval updated 30/6/17

The Equality Act 2010 places a 'General Duty' on all public bodies to have 'Due regard' to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

We do this by undertaking equality impact assessments (EqIAs) to help us understand the implications of policies and decisions on people with protected characteristics – EqIAs are our way of evidencing this.

All assessments must be published on the NCC equalities web pages. All Cabinet papers where an EqIA is relevant **MUST** include a link to the web page where this assessment will be published. If you require assistance in getting your EqIA published, please contact equalities@northamptonshire.gov.uk

PART 1

Description of current provision/policy and main beneficiaries/stakeholders

The NCC Sensory Impairment Service delivers Northamptonshire's responsibilities for children and young people with a sensory impairment. The Service currently employs 79 staff (63.48 full time equivalent), and has an overall service budget of £2.5 million, which is funded by the Designated Schools Grant. The service supports children with both hearing impairment and visual impairment.

Among the staff are specialist teachers who assess children's needs, undertake direct teaching with children and offer advice and training to schools. Access and Communication Workers (ACSWs) provide day to day support to children in schools. Resource Supervisors adapt curriculum resources and IT Technicians supply and maintain specialist technical and IT equipment. There is also provision for specialist Braille, British Sign Language (BSL) and mobility teaching and support. The service has a business and office manager, who manages the budget, databases and admin systems. The senior management is made up of a Head of Service and two deputies, one of whom is an Educational Audiologist and one of whom is the Early Years lead.

Description of proposal under consideration/development

It is proposed that a new model and staffing structure, with stronger links to a school/s, with a more rigorous quality assurance, advisory and outcome related focus, plus an income generating model be developed to deliver the Sensory Impairment Service.

The review has identified that the majority of what the Service currently does should be maintained or improved and developed.

There are two main areas where changes are proposed to the way that the service is delivered.

1. Access and Communication Support

The proposed new staffing structure would not include all of the current Access and Communication Support Worker (ACSW) posts. There would be 4 FTE posts retained centrally which would have a focus on Early Years support and cover visual impairment and hearing impairment.

The aspiration is that children in schools would continue to receive the high quality specialist support that they require and schools would be provided with additional designated funding to help pay for this.

2. Where the Service sits within NCC organisation

The Service will remain a specialist teaching, advisory and training service. The question is where this best sits within the NCC organisation. Based upon existing practice in other areas and feedback from staff consultation, it seems that there are 2 potential options:

a) A central service based at NCC premises and line managed through the Assistant Director for Vulnerable Learners within the County Council, or

b) An NCC school based service – A school enters into an agreement whereby the Sensory Impairment Service becomes part of its structure; benefitting from the teacher standards, its data capture, reporting and evaluation procedures, continuous professional development (CPD) and governance structure. The team would have a common base and somewhere to house its equipment. This may be on a site local to the school.

A number of further recommendations have also been made and consultation feedback on these is also welcomed.

- That there remains a focus on the early years and building the independence and resilience of children and young people, i.e. through the continued development of specialist IT software and hardware where possible and through the mobility officer post.
- That the funding for sensory support for children and young people becomes consistent with other SEN support to schools, reflects the additional cost of specialist support staff and with its own Early Years support system, directly via the High Needs funding process.
- That the Service develop an income generating model where schools can choose to purchase services, which would be additional to the core services offered. It is expected that these core services would continue to be provided without charge for pupils assessed at band 1 to 3 of the NatSIP criteria.
- That the Service improve and extend their training and advice offer to schools, to include support for recruitment of specialist support assistants.
- That the Service improve and extend the Quality Assurance and monitoring of schools, working in partnership with the NCC School Improvement colleagues.
- That the senior leader and all teachers in the Service build links with identified 'best practice beacon' schools in order to keep up to date with pedagogy and practices, including systems for recording and analysing performance information and impact measurement.

These recommendations would

- enable the LA to carry out its statutory duties
- be consistent with other areas nationally
- take account of the NatSIP guidance

Data used in this Equality Impact Assessment (general population data where appropriate but each EqIA should contain information on people who use the service under consideration – if this is not applicable to your proposal then you probably do not need to do an EqIA)

Data Source (include link where published)	Please summarise what the data tells us – for example “X number of people use this service, X are male, Y are female etc”
Service records and data	<p>In total 854 children are supported by the service, almost evenly split between male and female.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 584 (68%) have a Hearing Impairment (HI) ○ 270 (32%) have a Visual Impairment (VI) <p>As data relating to ethnicity is not consistently recorded across the service, this cannot be quantified currently.</p>

	<p>38 children are supported by ACSWs, of this number 20 have a Hearing Impairment and are BSL users and 18 have Visual Impairment and use Braille.</p> <p>The overall age split for the children that are supported is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early years 16%; ○ Primary 47% ○ Secondary 37% <p>These ratios are fairly consistent across HI and VI.</p> <p>Overall 76% of the children are supported through assessment and monitoring, and the remaining 24% are supported with regular teaching. This split however differs significantly between HI and VI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HI - 86% assessment and monitoring, 14% regular teaching ○ VI - 57% assessment and monitoring, 43% regular teaching
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Tick the relevant box for each line by using a capital 'P' to make a <input type="checkbox"/>	Based on the above information, what impact will this proposal have on the following groups?			
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
Sex			x	
Gender Reassignment			x	
Age				x
Disability				x
Race & Ethnicity			x	
Sexual Orientation			x	
Religion or Belief (or No Belief)			x	
Pregnancy & Maternity			x	
Human Rights (Please see articles in toolkit)			x	
Other Groups (rural isolation, socio-economic exclusion etc)			x	

Initial impact	
Explain your findings above	Actions identified to mitigate, advance equality or fill gaps in information
It is expected that the changes will have a neutral effect on most protected characteristics. At this stage we have assessed the impact on age and disability as 'unsure' because there is still work to be done and decisions to be taken on the final service structure. However, as most of the services will stay the same and the new structure will be designed to be more outcome-focussed with a stronger quality assurance framework, we wouldn't anticipate a negative impact on those groups.	Public consultation as set out below.

Do you need to undertake further work (e.g. consultation, further equality analysis) based on the impact and actions identified above? If yes, set this out below and then carry out the work and complete Part 2	
Public consultation and events. In addition to being posted on the Public Consultation Register from 4th April (together with an on-line survey), two public meetings have been arranged:	
Tuesday 11th April 2017, 6.00pm to 7.30pm - Far Cotton Rec Centre, Towcester Road, Northampton NN4 8LG	
Wednesday 12th April 2017, 6.00pm to 7.30pm - NCC CFE, Grafton Court, Kettering Venture Park, Northampton NN15 6XR	
A further public meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday 25 th April, with details to be confirmed and publicised in due course.	
Meetings have been arranged with potential NCC-maintained schools to explore the proposal for the service to be managed through a school.	
The public consultation is due to end on 12 th May. By 24th May we expect to have reviewed the feedback received. A report will be submitted to DMT as soon as possible thereafter, for final decision-making.	

PART 2 – if required

Consultation, follow up data and information gathered from actions identified above	
	What does this information tell us?
We received 80 responses to the online survey. Almost half of those were from parents, 14% were from employees of the service, 12.5% were from schools, 10% were from voluntary organisations and 2.5% were from a child or a young person using the service.	1. Schools to be responsible for recruitment, employment and management of specialist support workers (ACSWs) with designated funding from high needs block

Comments were received from respondents based across the county. Almost half were based in Northampton, with the next highest number of responses from Wellingborough and Kettering.

We held a range of different meetings which were attended by around 90 people made up of parents and other local stakeholders, children and young people and representatives of schools.

We also held meetings with staff, made presentations to trade union colleagues and elected members and held discussions with voluntary groups.

This recommendation was not supported by the majority of parents, staff and voluntary groups.

2. The question as to whether the Service should
 - a. Remain centrally managed by the Local Authority and based on NCC premises or
 - b. Be managed through an NCC maintained special school through a Service Level Agreement

Under either option the Service would remain a specialist teaching, training and advisory service.

Based on comments received it was evident that this proposal was not well understood and could have been better explained as this may have alleviated some of the concerns raised

- 3) Focus on Early Years with emphasis on building resilience and independence

All feedback supported this recommendation and valued the importance of early identification and support.

- 4) Consistent funding for children with Sensory Impairment alongside those with other SEND

Feedback generally focussed on concerns that funding should not be 'cut' for children with a sensory impairment, which is not the case.

- 5) Develop a core and traded service model available to schools

Feedback was generally supportive of this recommendation, although doubts were expressed that schools would have the finance available to purchase additional services

- 6) Improve and extend training and advice offer to schools in order to develop their staff

Feedback on this recommendation was mixed, the majority of respondents wanted the ACSWs to continue to be centrally employed however they also wanted schools to have a better understanding of sensory impairment and welcomed an offer to schools which supported them to be more aware of the needs of this group of pupils

7) Improve and extend the quality assurance offer to schools

This recommendation received positive feedback and respondents were generally supportive of having a clear quality assurance framework in place for schools who already currently employ their own ACSWs or may do in the future.

8) The Sensory Impairment Service build links with best practice beacon schools and also work in a multi-agency manner extending partnerships with health and social care colleagues

There was positive feedback about the service working to develop beacon schools locally alongside developing relationships and sharing learning from good practice in other areas.

More detailed consultation analysis can be found via this [link](#)

Final impact analysis (taking the findings from Part 2 into account) – including review date if required

Feedback from consultation has led to the proposal being changed in the following ways to mitigate many of the concerns and risks that have been highlighted:

The service will now retain more centrally employed ACSWs than originally proposed, for students with the highest level of need. Some schools will also be directly employing ACSWs and they will receive appropriate high needs funding for this purpose. Regarding the question of where the Service sits within NCC organisation, this will not be implemented for September 2017 however discussions with the potential schools are ongoing

A number of new proposals have now been developed as a direct result of feedback which we have received during the course of this consultation. The review will take these proposals forward into the new model. These included:

- Termly information events with parents to discuss service developments, areas of good practice, new initiatives and feedback on parents' views of the service.
- The establishment of a representative group of individuals from parents, professionals, staff and the voluntary sector who will act in a similar way to a governing body, in ensuring best practice and challenge.
- The development of a robust quality assurance framework for the centrally managed service which may entail the involvement of external agencies for certain aspects of this process.
- Improved information published about the services offered and how these are reviewed and adapted to take into account the changing needs of children and young people. This would also include improving the direct communications to parents/carers about the support provided for their individual child/young person.

As a result, we believe that the overall impact of the changes will be neutral, with positive impacts for age (children and young people) and disability because children and young people with disabilities who are being supported by the service will have designated Early Years Access and Communication Workers (ACSWs) and schools should have an increased awareness of the needs of children with a sensory impairment.