1. **SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS**

1.1. Local Authorities (LAs) have a duty to ensure a sufficiency of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. We have commissioned a programme of work to undertake a comprehensive assessment of need and map existing provision, to help identify our provision gaps.

1.2. During the 2014/15 academic year a review of provision for children and young people with additional needs was undertaken across Suffolk. Phase one of the review process maintained a focus on Alternative Provision and Special Schools, whilst phase two which took place in the 2015 summer term period looked at targeted elements of SEN and specialist educational provision.

1.3. The LA aims to achieve geographical consistency of targeted and specialist educational provision across the county, so that a suitable local offer is available wherever a child or young person lives in Suffolk.

1.4. The LA facing considerable financial and demographic pressures in meeting the demand for educational provision for the rising number of children and young people presenting with more severe and complex needs. Local evidence proves that the status quo is no longer sustainable or responsive to local need, with regards to the current specialist educational provision programme that is commissioned by the LA.

1.5. This report presents a number of findings and recommendations for the range of commissioned specialist educational provision for vulnerable learners, that came into scope for the review programme:
   - Specialist support centres (SSCs)
   - Moderate learning difficulties (MLD) Residential provision
   - Post 16 specialist provision
   - Continuum of specialist educational provision
   - Alternative Provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

1.6. The report and associated recommendations have been developed with considerable support and challenge from local school leaders, parents/carers, partner agencies, school governors, LA officers and provision providers (this includes PRU, Special School and SSC head teachers).

1.7. The LA now plans to move to the next stage in the process, which will be the formal consultation phase with a focus on the recommendations provided.
2. DETAILS

2.1. The review of specialist educational provision has been carried out in two phases. The 2015 summer term review of specialist educational provision follows the work previously undertaken earlier in the 2014/15 academic year (phase one), with a focus on local PRUs/AP, Special Schools and Support Services.

2.2. Outcomes to date:
- Reduction in permanent exclusions in local schools;
- Increased PRU/AP capacity for earlier intervention activity;
- Reforms to the In-Year Fair Access Protocol and supporting arrangements;
- Development of locality assessment centre programmes;
- Strengthened locality ownership and oversight of vulnerable children;
- Development of locality governance and quality assurance arrangements driven by schools.

2.3. The phase two review process focused on other areas of specialist educational provision and included the work of SSCs.

2.4. Phase two review forecasted outcomes:
- An increase in the number of post 16 offer places in Suffolk. There is a proposal to commission provision at the Bridge School campus;
- Fewer Suffolk children and young people needing to be educated in non-Suffolk settings;
- Continuum of specialist educational provision model designed in response to need, rather than convenience leading to better outcomes;
- Through restructuring and redesign, our specialist educational provision is better positioned to meet the needs of pupils with a higher level complexity of need. A natural consequence from this will be that more pupils will be able to have their needs met in their local school.

2.5. As part of the overall provision for children and young people with additional learning needs, Suffolk County Council commissions specialist educational provision for vulnerable learners in:
- 14 PRUs
- 10 Special Schools
- 7 SSCs in mainstream primary schools.

2.6. Whilst this report presents findings and recommendations across a number of SEN settings, the main focus will be on areas not fully captured in the phase one Working Together for Inclusion report and action plan:
- SSCs
- MLD Residential provision (The Ashley and Priory Special Schools)
- Post 16 specialist provision – south Suffolk
- Continuum of specialist educational provision
- AP redesign (PRUs and Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS))

2.7. The work of SSCs is intended to support pupils who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (previously statements of SEN).
### 2.8. The Future of Specialist Educational Provision in Suffolk

All of the seven centres have been established for several years, whilst an eighth (Abbots Green Primary School) was closed at short notice in the summer of 2014 at the request of the school’s governing body. Each centre is intended to serve an area that is wider than the catchment for the school in which it is located. The LA provides transport for those children who live outside the immediate area. SSCs were previously commissioned by Suffolk County Council on behalf of all schools following agreement from the School’s Forum to use Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding for this purpose.

### 2.9. The Future of Specialist Educational Provision in Suffolk

The SSCs were originally designed to offer flexible and local early intervention provision for SEN children to avoid the need for this cohort having to travel across the county to access specialist educational provision. This has proved difficult to achieve for a number of reasons, including the unequitable geographic distribution of the seven SSCs. This was due to the centres being established where schools “offered” to host these settings, rather than being based in an area of “defined need”.

### 2.10. The Future of Specialist Educational Provision in Suffolk

All SSCs are monitored through the work of service level agreements which will end on 31st August 2016 unless they are renewed.

### 3. REVIEW FINDINGS

#### 3.1. Continuum of specialist educational provision

This section provides a summary of the key findings from the specialist educational provision review process. The findings illustrate that despite the considerable investment made by the LA and a number of partners with a commitment to improving the outcomes for vulnerable learners that locally, that there remains in place a number of gaps in the local offer and the quality of specialist educational provision that is made available in response to need.

#### 3.2. Continuum of specialist educational provision

3.2.1. The rising number of children and young people needing to be educated in non–Suffolk educational settings acutely illustrates that the local continuum of specialist educational provision has gaps in response to meeting needs.

3.2.2. There is limited access to CAMHS provision for children and young people with SEND.

3.2.3. Good opportunities are provided for children with sensory impairment to access their full entitlement and inclusion in both the primary and secondary phases.
3.2.4. There is evidence of good multi-agency working in assessing needs and planning and reviewing provision, with a clear and effective focus on early identification and intervention. For example the work of the County Inclusive Resource (CIR) is well regarded by the SSCs.

3.2.5. There is no evidence of locality and strategic connectivity in planning across special schools, SSCs and mainstream schools, leading to a fragmented and non-cohesive/fluid continuum of specialist educational provision.

3.2.6. The current DfE designations of the SSCs and special schools are at variance with the actual functions of most of the settings, the needs of the pupils attending and the needs of the pupils locally.

3.2.7. The commissioning of residential and the SCC provision has not been informed by recent outcome based data or information about the changing local demand.

3.2.8. In response to the need for reform, a dedicated task and finish group has recently been commissioned to review the work of the existing SEN banding system, with a view to develop a new model that will be future proofed and further responsive and flexible to local needs.

3.3. Post 16 Offer

3.3.1. There are considerable capacity pressures locally in providing sufficiency of specialist educational provision for post 16 learners with SEND. Whilst developments are underway to develop new provision and extend existing provision, currently the level of demand exceeds supply. The change from a five to three day offer being provided by Suffolk One, has led to an unequitable learning offer for post 16 aged learners with SEN in the southern part of the county.

3.3.2. Following the SEND Reforms anecdotal evidence proves that there has been an increase in interest for young people with SEND seeking to be able to access vocational education. Unfortunately the limited post 16 specialist educational provision offer in some localities has impacted on the ability to convert the raised interest into actual participation rates for this cohort, with local participation outcomes currently the lowest in the region.

3.4. Specialist Support Centres

3.4.1. SSCs in Suffolk are long-standing and an integrated part of a number of inclusive primary schools. Parents and carers of children accessing the SSCs are very supportive and appreciative of the provision, feeling that the settings have allowed their children to make progress from previous lower baselines. Pupils are largely placed in SSCs with variable time spent in mainstream lessons.

3.4.2. The level of need of pupils who attend or are supported through the SSCs currently varies considerably. At one extreme there are some pupils with severe learning difficulties who might later transfer to a special school, and at the other extreme there are some learners who could have their needs met in local primary schools with funds from the school’s own resources.
3.4.3. In the SSCs, staff working with learners with social and emotional difficulties often struggled to get external support from agencies other than the LAs education-based behaviour support and CIR services.

3.4.4. The SSCs are not fulfilling all of the originally planned purposes. Whilst all of the settings appear to provide all learners with a positive and in many cases a progressive experience, in an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning, the majority of users fail to make sufficient progress to prevent the need for placement at a special school at the end of the primary phase (90% of year six SSC learners over last three years have gone to special schools).

3.4.5. The learner’s “mainstream experience” is variable across the settings. Some settings were more structured than others with regards to planned SSC learner integration with mainstream lessons and activities. Some settings failed to extend the SSC learners beyond some only accessing integration opportunities in social periods such as breaks and lunch time.

3.4.6. In some SSC settings there is a degree of mismatch between need and provision.

3.4.7. There is a different average funding level per pupil across SSCs owing to unused places, with all SSCs susceptible to fluctuations in numbers (low incidence need).

3.4.8. The involvement of support staff is most effective in the progress that special educational needs pupils make because they are briefed very well by the teachers.

3.4.9. The seven SSCs in the main provide provision for learners from their cluster area, but do not provide countywide coverage. It should be noted that from the seven centres, one (St Gregory) is situated in the western part of the county and there are no centres in the northern area of the county. The current SSC commissioning arrangement leaves six of the centres located in the southern area and this fails to deliver an equitable offer across the county.

3.4.10. Almost all SSC leadership teams identified the need to unify leadership of all aspects of the SSCs across Suffolk to work towards an integrated or virtual provision approach where possible. SSC schools stated that a central LA point of contact to provide challenge and support, would result in a more strategic, effective and cohesive model.

3.4.11. In recent years the SSCs have not been subject to periodic review, monitoring or evaluation and as a result, despite some operational joint working, the centres were until recently working more in isolation than was originally intended. There have been recent developments being driven by SSC leaders and staff to improve joint working and sharing of practice.

3.4.12. The LA could secure improved value for money outcomes by ensuring that the resources within these centres form part of a coherent and consistent graduated response to SEND that is accessible county-wide.

3.5. MLD Residential
3.5.1. The LA currently commissions residential provision for learners with moderate learning difficulty needs at the Ashley and Priory Special Schools. Whilst the provisions in both settings are well utilised, in light of the changing demographic and increasing complexity of need amongst Suffolk’s SEND population, there is an urgent need to review the need and sustainability of the current arrangements in response to local needs.

3.5.2. It is recognised by local schools and stakeholders that the current MLD residential models “as is” and without change in terms of the cohort these provide for will struggle to remain a commissioning priority for the LA to continue to support. Review findings suggest that the residential offer currently in place at these settings has not been driven by a needs or demand led requirement and therefore appears to maintain a historic approach to when more MLD settings nationally retained residential facilities. Currently it is the school and not the LA that determines if learners are allocated placement in the residential setting. The threshold of need for the cohort of learners currently accessing the residential provision is questionable considering local needs.

3.6. Alternative Provision

3.6.1. Although Suffolk appears to have sufficient AP when compared to similar LAs, the cost of the provision per pupil place remains high compared to the national average which is between £12,000 and £18,000 (source – Charlie Taylor AP Reforms 2012). As the LA is not able to reduce the budgets of PRU provision because of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), the only option available would be to increase the number of pupils accessing each provision without increasing the PRU budget.

3.6.2. Through the work of the SLA framework the LA has requested that all Key Stage 1 to 3 PRUs (an average of £27,275 per place) increase the numbers on roll by 20% and Key Stage 4 PRUs (an average £20,071 per place) by 10%. This approach where implemented will create an additional 74 places for the county across all Key Stages and bring the average per place cost down to £20,417.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Key Stages Supported</th>
<th>Total number of AP placements</th>
<th>% of placements per school population</th>
<th>Total number of AP placements &amp; SEBD Specialist provision</th>
<th>% of placements per school population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>436 (160)</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>3 – 4</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>372 (252)</td>
<td>0.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>304 (54)</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>290 (0)</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>460 (93)</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon</td>
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<td>0.28</td>
<td>285 (0)</td>
<td>0.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
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<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hertfordshire</td>
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<td>918 (248)</td>
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<td>406</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>406 (0)</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6.3. To match the approximate per head PRU cost of other Local Authorities, we would need to increase our PRU establishment by another 100 places in
addition to the 20% uplift. This would provide Suffolk with 580 places in AP compared to the 406 we have currently and a per place cost of approximately £16,000. It would also mean that we would achieve 0.55% of places per school population that would place Suffolk well ahead of comparable authorities. A key question for local stakeholders is why would Suffolk require so much provision by comparison with other similar LA areas? It should be noted that more provision places does not equate to being an inclusive LA.

4. REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Continuum of specialist educational provision

4.1.1. Targeted work should be undertaken to explore whether some current “out-county” pupils could be placed in SSCs or Suffolk SEN provision as part of the local offer to their home locality.

4.1.2. There is a need to review referral pathways to CAMHS provision/services for SEND children. Findings from the review show that a high number of young people with social emotional behaviour difficulty (SEBD) needs requiring out of county provision, were previously unable to access CAMHS provision in their localities and therefore needed to be placed in specialist educational provision in order to access timely therapeutic interventions.

4.1.3. The work of the Local Offer in addition to good inclusive practice in a number of schools has proven to enhance the capacity of mainstream schools to be able to meet the increasing complexity of need of learners with SEND. The ability of schools to manage needs locally at a higher threshold level, should in the future lead to specialist educational provision providers being expected to cater for a higher threshold of learner complexity and need in response to local demand.

4.2. Post 16 Offer

4.2.1. The LA should undertake targeted activity with post 16 provision providers to increase the local educational and training offer for this cohort. The review process identified that there is a limited offer for post 16 learners with complex needs.

4.2.2. Through the work of the RPA Board targeted work should be undertaken to map need and review the post 16 provision offer to identify gaps and inform future commissioning priorities.

4.3. Specialist Support Centres

4.3.1. Revise the strategic purpose of the SSCs and the existing delivery model, and ensure that these are coherent with the aims and objectives of the LAs wider strategies for children and young people. The level of spend on SSCs is currently £1.3m per annum with 128 places being commissioned across the seven settings. The review process highlighted that more effective use of this funding can be made in response to need.

4.3.2. There is an opportunity to secure more efficient and effective use of the funding currently allocated to the SSCs by assessing the role and purpose of the centres, as part of a coherent graduated response to meeting additional needs across the county. The options provided below were identified by stakeholders during the review process as possible solutions for the future use of the investment made to SSCs:
- Reconfiguration and/or extend the remit of the provision
- Amalgamate provision where appropriate
- Changing of provision designation
- Potential closure of provision(s)
- Explore scope to deploy existing SSC provision and resource to reconfigure existing provision in response to local needs and develop locality ASD and/or SEBD SSC type provision to contribute to the local offer continuum of provision.
- Explore scope for developing an SSC academy with a SEBD and/or ASD focus in response to local needs.
- Explore scope for developing a hub and spoke model with outreach support
- No changes to the existing delivery model

4.4. MLD residential
4.4.1. Work with local providers and stakeholders to formally consult on changing the existing criteria for accessing the provision. Unless this provision caters for the needs of the learners that the LA and local schools are struggling to provide for, then it may be necessary to decommission and seek an alternative approach with the available resource.

4.5. Commissioning
4.5.1. The recently developed Joint Commissioning Framework with Health partners is a positive development. Work needs to be done to ensure all partners contribute effectively to the implementation of the framework.

4.5.2. The LA should establish SLAs with each Special School and SSC to clarify model and expected outcomes.

4.6. Alternative Provision
4.6.1. To secure improved value for money outcomes from the current level of finance invested in local AP, it is recommended that the LA with the support of local stakeholders consider a range of co-produced options through a formal consultation process (which will include children, young people, families and schools), to discuss the future organisation and commissioning of AP locally. This agenda has been subject to monitoring and scrutiny in recent months by the work of the locality governance groups. This is primarily in response to a heightened level of stakeholder dissatisfaction being driven by limited access to quality AP despite the level of financial investment made.

4.6.2. Options:
- To continue with the current AP commissioning arrangements including the respective 20% and 10% uplift that will be achieved through the SLA framework.
- Over time incrementally increase the numbers of pupils we are expecting the PRUs to accommodate, by increasing the % when reviewing the SLA each year until we reach 580 places. Many of these places could be provided through smaller satellite provision in the rural areas of Suffolk and introducing creative curriculum models.
- To offer the running of any Suffolk PRU not representing “best value” (between £16,000 and £21,000 per placement) because of high placement cost to the AP market.
- To offer the running of Suffolk PRUs to the AP market through a procurement process with an estate worth £9,318,953.
• To progress a provision review and redesign programme for the future work of AP in Suffolk. The future delivery model will be informed by the needs of the In year fair access panel.

• To develop a locality management approach to AP/PRUs, with the existing centres integrating, federating or aligning to develop a single AP offer for each of the localities. This would be facilitated by single leadership and governance arrangements for each locality, from the current model which sees 14 PRUs, 14 head teachers and governing bodies, 14 separate URNs (unique reference numbers), that are subject to 14 different inspection regimes.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Suffolk’s High Needs Block funding allocation is low compared to other LA areas nationally and is the third lowest in the country. This places considerable challenge for the LA in being able to effectively discharge the statutory duty to ensure there is sufficiency of educational provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.