

Broadening the specialist teaching offer for children and young
people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
Consultation, November 2021

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Introduction

We want to make sure that more children and young people with SEND benefit from specialist teaching support at the right time to ensure they can meet their educational goals. The specialist teachers within Buckinghamshire Council are part of our Integrated SEND Service. They offer support and specialist knowledge so that children and young people with SEND in Buckinghamshire schools are able to learn and achieve their personal best within their school or other setting. Specialist teachers work in partnership with schools, parents and other agencies and support children with a range of needs. These include:

- Autism / language difficulties
- Difficulties with understanding including Down Syndrome and specific learning difficulties
- Hearing impairment, visual impairment and multi-sensory impairment
- Physical difficulties

This consultation is about a proposal to modernise the way in which specialist teaching is delivered. We want to make sure that we can provide a high-quality service to all children with SEND. Currently only those with an Education, Health and Care Plan receive support. This means that many children and young people are not able to access the specialist teacher resource within the Council, and opportunities for early intervention are lost.

The proposal is not about cutting the service and there are no plans to reduce the level of resource overall. It is about a different way of providing specialist teacher advice and support so that schools and other settings are able to work more effectively with a larger number of children and young people. However, the number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans is increasing which does mean the current approach will not be feasible long-term. The number of Plans maintained by Buckinghamshire at 30 June 2021 (5167) was 6.4% higher than the number maintained at 30 June 2020 (4858). As a finite resource, if specialist teachers were to continue with the current model, demand could not be met.

In developing the proposal we have worked closely with FACT Bucks, the parent/carers forum, and SENDIAS to ensure this document is clear for families to respond to.

Context

The proposal outlined below aims to support the ambitions of our SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2021 - 23 that sets out our collective aspirations for all children and young people with SEND in Buckinghamshire. In particular, the proposals relate to Section C, objectives C1- C5: Ambitions of the future:

- C1. Early and intensive intervention as appropriate to ensure better outcomes are achieved for the child.
- C2. Schools deliver effective SEN support in line with the Code of Practice and as set out in 'Ordinarily Available Provision'.
- C3. Children and young people have the opportunity to receive an excellent education as locally as possible, without the fear of exclusion due to their special educational needs and disabilities.
- C4. Children and young people are able to develop key work skills through a broad and balanced curriculum with stretching progress measures.
- C5. Schools and colleges aspire, in particular, to be autism friendly as part of being inclusive, in order to meet a wide range of needs and support learning.

You may be interested to read the full strategy at:

<https://schoolsweb.buckscc.gov.uk/media/56587/send-inclusion-strategy-buckinghamshire.pdf>

Scope of the consultation

This consultation is focused only on specialist teachers who:

- work with children and young people with autism and/or have language needs. This area of need is known as Communication and Interaction
- work with children and young people with difficulties with understanding, including Down Syndrome and with specific learning difficulties. This area of need is known as Cognition and Learning.
- work with children with physical difficulties. This area of need is known as Physical.

This consultation will **not** consider the practice of those specialist teachers currently working for Buckinghamshire who support children and young people with a sensory impairment – hearing impaired, visually impaired, or with multi-sensory impairment. This area of need is known as Sensory. This team currently works across Buckinghamshire, delivering a need specific service, which is in line with the SEND Code of Practice that requires any teachers in this area to hold the appropriate qualification:

“Schools should work closely with the local authority and other providers to agree the range of local services and clear arrangements for making appropriate requests. This

might include schools commissioning specialist services directly. Such specialist services include...

- *specialist teachers or support services, including specialist teachers with a mandatory qualification for children with hearing and vision impairment, including multi-sensory impairment... (Those teaching classes of children with sensory impairment must hold an appropriate qualification approved by the Secretary of State. Teachers working in an advisory role to support such pupils should also hold the appropriate qualification.)”*
(SEND Code of Practice, 2015, 6.61)

There is no mandatory qualification for teachers specialising in any other area of need.

What do specialist teachers provide currently?

Specialist teaching services in scope for this consultation currently provide:

- support for children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- surgeries that SEN Coordinators (SENCOs) can attend on a half-termly basis to discuss children who are in receipt of SEN Support
- a helpline for the staff of schools and other settings that is active 1 afternoon a week
- a traded cognition and learning offer for schools
- contribute to the overall iSEND training offer for schools

Specialist teaching services aim to support schools and other settings to successfully include children and young people who have SEND. These teachers work primarily with mainstream schools, supporting children and young people of statutory school age. The support is given when the school or other setting’s own resources are being used, but it remains difficult for them to fully include the child or young person without external advice or support.

The current model: the tiered approach

In September 2019, the specialist teachers introduced a model known in Buckinghamshire as the ‘tiered approach’. This model aimed to enable specialist teachers to be more flexible in what they were able to provide. Children and young people were allocated to 1 of 5 tiers according to the complexity of their needs and the type of support they required.

More detail on this approach can be found here:

<https://schoolsweb.buckscc.gov.uk/media/54894/tiered-support.pdf>

This approach was a move away from putting a set number of hours of specialist teacher support in Education, Health and Care Plans. This was because having set hours in Plans:

- limited the service's ability to respond flexibly to needs as they arise
- limited the flexibility that schools and other settings have to support children to make progress
- limited the number of children and young people that specialist teachers can support and meant that only those with an Education, Health and Care Plan receive support.

What do we need to change now and why?

The value of having a specialist teaching service in some form is recognised by Buckinghamshire Council. This consultation is not in relation to a need to cut resources; it is about improving the service to have a greater and wider impact on our children and young people.

We need to change our delivery model to enable us to intervene earlier, upskilling schools to be able to support children at SEN Support stages and those with an Education, Health and Care Plan, helping to prevent needs escalating further.

The introduction of the tiered approach did not go far enough in changing how specialist teaching is delivered and specialist teachers are still unable to support all school-age children with SEND that need it. This is because while the support that is now offered is more flexible and varied (as the tier covers a range of support), it still links specialist teacher support only to those children with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

So, even with the tiered approach:

- the over reliance on specialist teachers working directly with pupils means they currently only benefit during the time the specialist teacher is at the school. This can affect progress for pupils, with skills learnt not necessarily being transferred into the classroom.
- the increased need, particularly in the Communication and Interaction area of need, has meant there is an over-reliance on other services such as speech and language therapists or paediatricians to conduct assessments / diagnose children, prior to teachers with specialisms in these areas being able to support children. This means children are not getting the support they need in a timely enough way.

Specialist teaching **advice** for children with Education, Health and Care Plans is not a statutory requirement. The **provision** that a child receives does however need to be specified in the Plan line with the Code of Practice. Buckinghamshire Education, Health and

Care Plans currently specify specialist teaching “hours,” or “tiers” to be delivered **only** by a specialist teacher. We know that in some cases, this provision could be delivered in a different way, and by a different professional, with guidance from specialist teachers or others.

What happens in other areas?

In reviewing our model, we have looked at how some other local authorities provide their specialist teaching services. Some areas use their specialist teachers to provide an advisory service (instead of, or, in some cases alongside doing direct work with children and young people). In these areas, the number of hours of specialist teacher time provided is not written into the Education, Health and Care Plan.

Kent County Council and Oxfordshire County Council, of similar sizes and demographic to Buckinghamshire, offer a graduated advisory model with regard to their specialist teaching, meaning they are able to reach more children through their offer, and upskill more staff who work with the children every day.

[Specialist teaching and learning services - Kent County Council](#)

[Communication and interaction support | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Milton Keynes Council is another area where a different approach to specialist teaching has been adopted. Following research conducted into the effectiveness of other models, we have largely based our proposal on the Milton Keynes model of an ‘Inclusion and Intervention Service’. This is due to this model working well and being recognised as good practice in the SEN Local Area Inspection in 2018 by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission ([Ofsted | Milton Keynes Council](#) 2018). You can read about this model which combines universal telephone support, advisory services and direct work with children and young people by early intervention staff and specialist teachers here:

[Inclusion and Intervention Team - Milton Keynes Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#)

In Buckinghamshire, SEND Advisors employed by the Early Years Service provide information, advice and training and are able to respond to all needs, regardless of SEN status. Early years settings have told us that this works well for them and they have had a positive experience. Early years settings have told us that this works well for them and they have had a positive experience. Comments from settings include:

“It was really useful to be able to talk about what is working well and we will implement some of those strategies over this term. I have looked again at the Ordinarily Available Provision document and shared it with the nursery staff. Following your conversation with me I agree we probably need to have another look at the environment and make changes which will help the SEND children in the nursery – and others.”

“Thanks for the report and your visit today. Both are very helpful. We feel more confident, after our talk, in implementing the provision needed to support the range of children with SEND here.”

“Massively appreciate your support visit yesterday, we covered a lot through our conversation. I know you invested time in me yesterday and wanted to let you know that I really appreciate it and you have supported me to think through what I know and use it effectively to support SEND children in my class. Having a balanced conversation with you made me feel much better and I know what I need to do to support the children in their next steps. I am positive that some of the children we discussed will be at age expected level before the end of the term with your advice. Thank you so much for being so generous with your time.”

The proposal

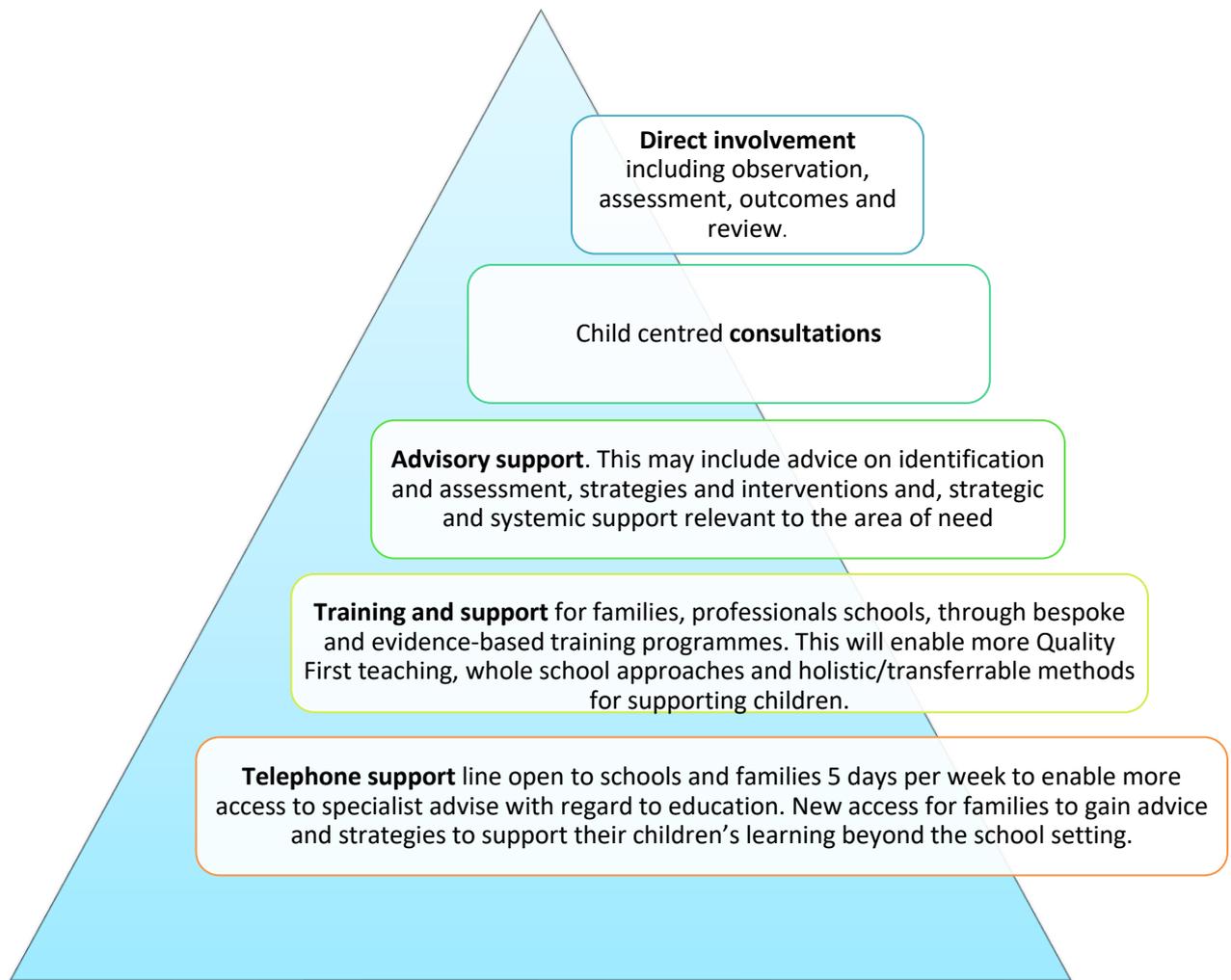
The proposal that we are consulting on is to **develop a new specialist teaching offer for schools and other settings that means that they have the skills and knowledge to support all pupils with SEND to achieve the best possible outcome.**

This change would mean that:

- more schools and other settings are able to access the appropriate level of support to meet the needs of all their pupils with SEND
- more pupils, including those receiving SEN support, would benefit from an inclusive and early intervention approach
- a broader, more flexible menu of support would be available according to the level of need.
- wider / bespoke training programmes will be available to schools and other settings, other professionals and families
- access to services would be needs led and **not** reliant on a child or young person having an Education, Health and Care Plan, or a medical diagnosis.

Referrals for individual support would be made by schools and other settings on **one referral form** with the emphasis on what the child’s needs are, what provision the school has put in place, and what has not worked for the child, following meaningful and purposeful intervention. **Referrals would be triaged to enable the most appropriate professional to be assigned** if deemed necessary (e.g. specialist teacher, educational psychologist, therapist).

The diagram below illustrates the support that would be available.



The benefit of moving to a more advisory approach alongside some direct work is that it will:

- enable schools and other settings to be better equipped to engage children with SEND in learning. Advice, guidance and support will be available to all schools and settings so that they can implement strategies that will help every child or young person with SEND at the earliest stage. This includes those with additional needs that do not require an EHCP
- enable school staff to work effectively with pupils with SEND, rather than waiting for an Education, Health and Care Plan in order for others to support. This means support is in place sooner and classroom teachers feel confident that they are able to include all children in their teaching
- ensure that specialist teachers can be available to support early identification of need.

What the research says

Research shows that when **parents have direct access to professionals for support and advice, problems can be resolved more quickly**. Extending our existing telephone helpline to families aims to support this. The Lamb Inquiry (2009, p.27, section 2.31) identifies *“the importance of access [for families] at this stage is its potential to address problems early and to promote a collaborative problem-solving approach. The early and positive engagement with parents can increase parents’ confidence that schools and services are responsive to difficulties that children encounter.”*

The SEND Code of Practice (2015, p.103) is clear that pupils receiving SEN Support should be able to access specialist teaching expertise when it is identified as being required. We would like to make sure that our specialist teachers can offer advice that supports learners as soon as their expertise is needed. Government research shows that **getting the right help early on helps young people to do as well as possible** as adults, for example, meaning they are more likely to get a job and live independently.

[Early intervention: the next steps - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\), \(2011\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Why early intervention matters | Early Intervention Foundation \(eif.org.uk\)](http://eif.org.uk)

[Evidence-Based Early Years Intervention Report by The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee](#)

[Realising the Potential of Early Intervention by the Early Intervention Foundation](#)

Government guidance (Lamb Inquiry, 2009 and the SEND Code of Practice, 2015) is clear that **all learners should benefit from teaching which helps everyone to learn, is of high quality and is adapted to suit different learners**. This is called Quality First Teaching. It is important therefore that our model of specialist teaching supports schools and other settings to develop their skills to deliver Quality First teaching

How will this affect my child, school or other setting?

Every child or young person will have different needs and therefore the changes will impact in different ways. The examples below describe what the support might look like.

Example 1:

Tom has Autism. He currently receives specialist teacher support at tier 2 and this is written into his Education, Health and Care Plan. At his Annual Review it is agreed that Tom needs a specific intervention to support the development of his social skills. The school have the skills and knowledge to deliver this intervention, as they have used it with other pupils. They don't feel they need any further advice. Tier 2 is subsequently removed from his EHC Plan; however, the details of the specific social skills intervention are written into section F to ensure his needs as identified in Section B are met, and Tom can achieve his outcomes.*

**If the school had needed advice a specialist teacher could have advised on which programme to use, how it is best delivered, and how to assess Tom to enable him to make progress towards his outcomes. This provision would be reviewed in conjunction with the specialist teacher.*

Example 2:

Shelley has a SEN Support Plan to support her speech and language needs. The school have limited experience in supporting children with Shelley's needs, and they don't know where they can access additional support. The SENCo calls the telephone support line and talks to a specialist who gives her some strategies that the school could try with Shelley to help her. The SENCo calls a meeting with the family to update the SEN Support Plan and put in place the recommended strategies delivered on a daily basis as part of a quality first teaching offer over a period of 6 weeks, delivered by the class teacher(s) and/or teaching assistant(s).

Example 3:

Raj has a SEN Support Plan in place to support his social interaction needs. The school have implemented specific interventions to support Raj with this, however, following cycles of assess, plan, do and review, Raj has made limited progress. The school decide to put in a request for specialist teacher involvement to advise on what can be implemented next to support Raj. The request is triaged by the SEND Service local area team (Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern and South Bucks, Wycombe) and a specialist teacher is allocated to make contact with the school and provide specific advice contributing to the assessment and planning for Raj's next steps.

For schools and other settings, the new approach would mean classroom teachers and SENDCos would have access to more training, advice and support, including discussions about individual children and young people as well as groups. Support will be accessed at an earlier stage, rather than waiting for a diagnosis or Education, Health and Care Plan to be in

place. They will be supported to consider new approaches that would help children to be included and engaged in the curriculum.

If agreed, when would this happen?

The proposed new delivery model would be implemented step by step over a period of time starting from September 2022.

For those children who have specialist teacher provision defined in their Education, Health and Care Plan

The specialist teacher provision is reviewed on an individual basis as part of the Annual Review process and a decision taken about how needs can be met based on advice obtained through this process. If the proposed model was implemented, reference to specific specialist teacher advice would be removed from an Education, Health and Care Plan where it is agreed at the Annual Review meeting that the child's identified needs can be met through schools and families accessing provision through the new model. The provision (that may be informed by specialist teacher advice) would still be specified in a draft amended Education, Health and Care Plan. In line with the legal timeframe, families will have at least 15 days to respond to the draft amended Education, Health and Care Plan.

For those children and young people not currently accessing specialist teacher provision

It is anticipated that schools and other settings would be able to make referrals to the new service and access the telephone support line from September 2022. Families would also be able to access advice. This would however be dependent on how quickly plans can be amended as part of the Annual Review process and may need to take a phased approach to ensure the new model can be introduced successfully without disrupting support for children and young people.