Review of Specialist and Alternative Educational Provision in North Somerset

December 2017

Helen Caldwell & Gail Smith
People and Communities
Strategy & Policy Development Team
Review of Specialist and Alternative Education Provision in North Somerset

Table of Contents

Introduction and Executive Summary 4

Summary of recommendations 6

Part 1 - Specialist Provision 10

Introduction 10
North Somerset School Organisation Principles 10
Note on limitations of data 11
Recommendations 11
Opportunities 14
Scope of Analysis 17
Engagement 18
Analysis of current specialist provision 18
Analysis of current need 20
School place allocations 23
Out of area placements 25
Tribunals 29
Financial information 30
Future needs 31
Conclusions 35
Appendix 1 – Data used in projections 37
Appendix 2 – Categories of need 40

Part 2 - Alternative Provision 41

Introduction 41
Purpose of report 41
National context 42
Permanent exclusions – National 42
Permanent exclusions – Local analysis 45
Early help 47
Culture and use of language 47
Alternative Provision – Sufficiency in North Somerset 48
The Prevention and Re-engagement Service 52
Quality – Our current position 53
Areas identified for improvement 56
Outcome focused commissioning 58
The range of provision 60
Movement between mainstream schools and VLC 62
Tuition Service 64
Six-day provision and Children Missing Education 66
Children with additional needs 66
Use of thresholds to access social care support 68
Improved support from other agencies 69
Refugees 71
Elective Home Education 71
Assessment of need and support 72
Out of School Panel 73
Managed transfers 74
Costs and value for money 76
Options and recommendations 79

Acknowledgements 84
Executive Summary and Introduction

This report outlines the process and findings of the review of Specialist and Alternative Educational Provision which took place from September to December 2017. The review was initially commissioned to assist with the use of the SEND capital provision funding and the High Needs Strategic grants from the Department for Education (DfE) but was extended to consider the wider picture of educational provision for vulnerable children and young people in North Somerset. It was anticipated that the review would identify a number of strategic recommendations which the Directorate Leadership Team, as commissioners of services to meet the needs of this group, would consider and progress.

Whilst conducted as a single piece of work with shared elements and activity, we have presented the findings in two separate chapters as the issues facing Specialist and Alternative Provision require distinct approaches. However, as anticipated, there is a considerable overlap both in the cohort of pupils which use these services, and the challenges which are faced both by providers and commissioners. In undertaking the review we have engaged with all North Somerset Special Schools, Voyage Learning Campus, and a broad cross-section of mainstream schools in the area, along with managers and decision-makers across the wider support system for pupils with additional needs. We have not consulted widely with children and families at this point, as it was felt that it would be more appropriate and less disruptive to approach them for their views on more tangible outcomes and proposals.

The past five years have been a time of considerable change in the education landscape, both nationally and locally. This period has seen a shift of financial decision-making from councils to schools and a change in the role of the Local Authority – essentially moving from being a provider to a commissioner of education services. However, it is clear from our conversations with providers and local authority colleagues alike, that the shift in this role is not yet complete, and that the necessary but disruptive reorganisations of Local Authority services and staffing have further complicated the picture.

An important over-arching outcome from both parts of this review has been a need to stabilise the system with clarity on leadership and governance, and on our future commissioning intentions.

Our findings

In the review of Specialist Provision where collaboration between schools and the council is well established but still sometimes challenging, we found that commissioning of sufficient provision was the most pressing issue, with a large cohort of pupils moving outside North Somerset and a need to both reconfigure our existing provision and develop new solutions to meet current need. There is also strong evidence for growing demand ahead, and increasing clarity on the type of support which will be needed and the locations it is most likely to need to serve.

In our work on alternative provision, while the availability and sufficiency of services remains a major factor, the culture, leadership and process of collaboration were more pressing issues, with decisions taken at a national and local level proving
divisive and challenging. In some senses, all partners are attempting to deal with new and emerging issues using outdated tools and processes which are no longer fit for purpose.

The options available to mainstream schools to provide for excluded pupils are limited and our alternative provision is challenged to meet an extremely broad range of needs within a single service. This often means it lacks clarity and purpose in outcomes, and doesn’t deliver the best value for money. Too few children return to mainstream education after attending alternative provision, and we have also noted that pupils with behaviours which challenge mainstream schools often fall into alternative provision via a permanent exclusion. All too often these children remain in this provision for the long term – effectively using it as a form of specialist placement. This blurring between these two forms of educational provision creates a problematic situation where pupils become ‘stuck’, alternative provision reaches capacity and the need for more specialist support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulty is masked until the situation is desperate. The configuration of specialist provision in North Somerset has not kept pace with these changes, which has resulted in increasing placements outside the area.

Thus, several key themes and questions arose in the review:

**Culture**
- How does the local authority provide leadership and support in a system which is by nature becoming more disaggregated and fragmented?
- How do we all work together in a changing and challenged system, to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children and young people remain paramount?
- How we redefine the roles of the local authority, school and provider to ensure that we achieve collective goals effectively and efficiently?

**Process**
- How can we ensure that we operate in ways which recognise our shared responsibilities and challenges, and that vulnerable children aren’t ‘lost’ in these transactions?
- How do systems and processes need to change to account for the changed roles in schools, the local authority and our partners?
- How will they need to change in future as this develops further?
- What steps can be taken to better align support for vulnerable children and young people across the education, health and social care landscape – particularly where resources for early help and CAMHS in particular are scarce?

**Commissioning**
- What activity and new development is required to provide sufficient capacity of the type and quality needed to serve a growing population?
- What new partnerships may need to be developed to ensure that all opportunities for new provision are realised?
- How can we leverage the best possible outcomes and value from our existing provision in North Somerset?
• Can we apply the principle of ‘local schools for local children’ more equitably for those needing specialist or alternative provision?
• How can our scarce resources be deployed to ensure that children’s needs are met effectively?

Outcomes

• How should we measure progress and change in quality, sufficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure our assumptions and projections are accurate?
• How can strategic leaders in the local authority, schools and partners be assured that they are responding effectively to change?
• In an increasingly complex system, how can the commissioner be assured that provision is providing the best possible outcomes for the best value?

Summary of Recommendations

We have presented, where possible, practical solutions which those we have consulted believe would support improvements in these areas. We have also considered opportunities which are already being explored by partners which, as commissioners of education services, the Local Authority may wish to further explore and develop into solutions which it supports or endorses. In this respect, the report should be read in conjunction with the emerging Education Commissioning Strategy, and a key recommendation is that the needs assessment work included in this report is repeated regularly and forms part of that strategy in future.

In common with the Education Commissioning Strategy, all recommendations will need further development, additional specialist work on feasibility and costing, and potentially further decisions on capital expenditure and site allocation. However this report should allow the Directorate Leadership Team and senior officers to develop a programme of work to address the issues raised.

Common Recommendations

The review recognises that the relentless pace of change and reorganisation means that issues facing education providers and commissioners may not always be visible to corporate and political leaders in the Local Authority. There is a widely held concern that the challenges faced by all partners in the system do not appear to be recognised, and a clear need for our governance and processes to be reviewed to account for the changing landscape.

These recommendations include:

• Recognition for the need to provide highly visible strategic leadership from within the Local Authority as the commissioner of specialist and alternative provision, but that this is unlikely to take the form of a specific, single post in the structure given the current resource situation.
• Development of a collective, collegiate approach to leadership around alternative and specialist provision across the wider education partnership, focusing on the Out of School Panel and Education Excellence Partnership, and ensuring that governance arrangements develop to support this approach.

• Ensuring regular assessment of the sufficiency and quality of current provision alongside robust projections of need across Specialist and Alternative provision. These will be incorporated in the Education Commissioning Strategy in the future.

• Recognition of the need to assess the quality of outcomes which current provision secures, along with its cost, to ensure that scarce resources are used effectively to support the most vulnerable children and young people.

Specialist Provision

The review recognises that the principle of local schools for local children is equally applicable to children with additional needs, and that that demand for specialist provision current exceeds supply in North Somerset. This applies in a general sense, but very specifically for particular areas of need including SEMH where a majority of children are educated outside the area, and where there is considerable demand masked by the use of alternative provision.

Thus, the recommendations include:

• Development of a new special school in North Somerset via the Capital Programme. This school will need to be capable of meeting the projected 5 and 9-year demand figures based on population growth in the SEND cohort, and should provide support which meets areas of need which are currently not well-served locally or where need exceeds demand, including SEMH and complex physical needs.

• North Somerset Council’s endorsement of a Free School bid, should the Department for Education announce further waves of funding, as supported by demand projections. This could be the delivery model for the provision listed above.

• Ensuring planned developments take into account the views of Headteachers currently leading specialist provision in their design and delivery, and delivering projects which provide future flexibility and extensibility by design.

• Recognition and support for the ambitious plans which our colleagues in special schools have developed to extend their current offer – including broadening age ranges served, working more effectively with early years providers, and providing more support to mainstream settings in managing complex needs.
• Improved support in the early years, along with further development of the EHCP pathway, to facilitate transition into local mainstream or specialist provision, and to reduce the reliance on out-of-area provision wherever possible.

**Alternative Provision**

The review notes that there is a national issue in securing sufficient, high quality alternative provision along with urgent local concern around the current model of provision, its capacity and its suitability for purpose. The diminishing range of early interventions available across the whole system place the available alternative provision under considerable additional stress. While dissatisfaction with the range of current provision is noted, there is a very limited provider market locally which means the Voyage Learning Campus needs to respond to a wide and sometime incompatible range of needs. Therefore, the following recommendations attempt to both reassert collective responsibility across the partnership, and to improve the range of options available to schools:

• A strengthened and well-attended Out of School Panel which becomes the single point of discussion between schools and the local authority, including clear governance and oversight with the panel reporting regularly to the Education Excellence Partnership.

• The development of a North Somerset Alternative Provision protocol and charter, to which all schools and providers are urged to sign-up, supporting the work of the Out of School Panel.

• Improved clarity around the level of service commissioned from the Tuition Service, to ensure the support can be used more flexibly and efficiently alongside a virtual learning environment.

• A refocusing of Voyage Learning Campus towards therapeutic and solution based support, with an aim of increasing the number of pupils who return to school settings where appropriate.

• Consideration of an ‘assessment centre’ approach, where plans for managed moves and potential reintegration can be formulated away from the school site, but without the urgent need to secure a new school place.

• Recognition that some students who are excluded may need to access specialist provision rather than the Voyage Learning Campus by factoring this need into our plans for new specialist provision.

• Development of a commissioning plan for alternative provision including work to broaden the market and to increase the options available to schools. The plan will take account of areas where schools have told us need is greatest, including support for SEMH, and support for young people who exhibit violent and aggressive behaviours.
• Support for schools to share and market their internal support across the local partnership. We have noted a number of positive, outcomes focused models of support which work well within schools, and a willingness to offer these solutions as part of a local market.

• Provision of professional development resources to schools around issues such as trauma, attachment, and neglect to support them in their work with students who may face exclusion.
Section 1 – Specialist Provision in North Somerset

1. Introduction

1.1 The aim of this review is to:

- provide a clear audit of the provision in use at present – including proposals to update knowledge of pupil and parents experiences and their perspectives on what works well;
- consider the potential future need for such provision, based on robust population projections and evidence of need generated by new housing developments;
- consider the type and scale of facilities which may be required to meet the changing needs of these cohorts in mainstream and special schools, and to consider the spaces and locations which would best provide for these;
- propose potential future strategic options for assuring access to high quality, local provision which supports a range of needs as locally as possible;

For the purpose of this paper, ‘specialist provision’ is educational placements made via an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Special Educational Needs.

2. North Somerset School Organisation Principles

2.1 The emerging ‘Education Provision in North Somerset: A Commissioning Strategy 2018 – 2021’ has identified key principles which are equally applicable when looking at the future of our Specialised Provision:

- To support the aspiration of ‘Local schools for Local Children’ – children should be able to attend a local school that enables them to achieve their potential.
- The belief that every child should have access to a good or outstanding school in a safe environment – all students should have access to the best education possible.
- To improve the outcomes of all children under 5 - we will close the gaps between groups with the poorest outcomes and the rest by ensuring early years services are accessible to all.
- The expectation that all schools, colleges or other education and training providers in North Somerset will welcome and provide effectively for all children – no child should be refused a place unless there are significant educational reasons to do so.
- Moral purpose – we will all work together and accept our joint collective responsibility to ensure that every child can reach their full potential and make a full contribution to society.

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1 Education Provision in North Somerset: A Commissioning Strategy 2018 – 2021 is being consulted on with key school representative groups during the winter of 2017 and will be the subject of public review in the Spring 2018
To promote educational opportunities that support life-long opportunities for students in preparation for leaving school and thereafter - all schools will enable all children and young people to flourish by contributing to their community and the economy.

To be a champion of children and young people – we will make decisions in the interests of children, actively championing the needs of every child and ensuring they are happy and safe.

3. Note on Limitations of data

3.1 The data which underpins this work is detailed in Appendix 1, along with a note regarding the limitations of the current data. It is important to note this in considering the projections and recommendations below.

4. Recommendations

4.1 This report aims to provide a range of options and potential projects to guide the Local Authority in commissioning Specialist Provision in the coming years.

4.2 As a number of these recommendations are likely to result in a requirement to manage capital projects as yet unfunded, further detailed work will be required to develop plans and financial projections.

4.3 On the basis of the findings of this review, the Directorate Leadership Team is recommended to support the development of the following actions and recommendations into formal plans:

4.3.1 Increase Availability of Special School Provision

Development of additional special school capacity

Projections indicate that within the next five years, additional pupil places will be required to provide sufficient specialist provision for pupils with complex health and physical needs, and that increased provision may result in fewer pupils with SEMH needing to travel out of the area.

(a) A new school with capacity for around 80 pupils should be developed as soon as possible so that the needs of pupils with complex health, physical and associated needs can be best met. Therefore, it is recommended this development starts to take place via North Somerset Council’s Capital Programme and in partnership with existing Special Schools Heads and Mainstream School Heads as soon as possible. Projections indicate that this capacity may be fully utilised in nine years, based on an analysis of current need and future population growth.

(b) On the basis of this growing need and noting the increasing numbers of children travelling to out-of-area provision or currently using inappropriate alternative provision there is a compelling case for North Somerset Council to
support a bid to develop specialist provision via the Free School programme when the opportunity arises. Currently, Wave 13 of the Free School bidding process is on hold, with no clear indication as to when the bidding process will be open again. Therefore, waiting for this process to be available may mean our emerging, immediate needs, will not be met with our existing provision.

(c) If a current school premises is involved in either of these opportunities, it would then be possible to release that premises to be utilised for other provision supporting other emerging needs identified in this review of Specialist and Alternative Provision.

Development of more ‘specialist’ school places in Special and Mainstream Schools.

(d) It is recommended that exploration is undertaken to identify ways the existing schools in North Somerset can extend their offer to more pupils with SEN, utilising and sharing the good practice and expertise in the area, thus minimising disruption for the pupil, family and school, when appropriate.

Current and future predictions indicate a need for more school places to support an increasing population of children with Autism Spectrum Conditions (where there is already considerable, but insufficient local support) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health challenges (where the majority of children with a diagnosis currently attend establishments outside North Somerset).

It is important that further consideration is given to the informal but well-established areas of specialism in NSC Special Schools, to ensure that they are positioned to meet future demand, particularly in these specialist areas and to share their expertise with each other and Mainstream Schools, supporting opportunities for pupils to be able to access schools in their own local geographic area.

This recommendation links to the review of alternative provision, where it is noted that exclusions and use of the Voyage Learning Campus are sometimes masking additional demand for specialist provision which might better be met by improving support in pupils’ current schools.

4.3.2 Process Improvement

Improved Early Intervention.

(e) It is recommended that work on the EHCP pathway in early years is urgently progressed to maximise opportunities in early years provision to promote readiness for school, and to develop a meaningful plan for the appropriate placement and support. Ultimately this provides the best chance for children with SEND to achieve optimum independence, find meaningful employment, to socialise and have better health when they become adults.

Evidence suggests early identification of needs and appropriate support in planning for pre-school children from Health, Social Care and Education can result in stable placements in local mainstream settings, reducing the reliance
on specialist settings or the need to seek out of area placements. The correct support, provided in partnership between health, education and social care services at this time can have a positive impact on the whole family including their emotional and mental wellbeing.

‘The science of early brain development can inform investments in early childhood. These basic concepts, established over decades of neuroscience and behavioural research, help illustrate why child development—particularly from birth to five years—is a foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society.’

Harvard University: Centre for the Developing Child

**Collective Responsibility.**

(f) It is recommended that North Somerset Council, working with schools and other partners, leads the facilitation of opportunities for all to work together to develop and support this relationship building, with the objective to collectively support pupils to reach their optimum independence as adults in their community.

It is recognised that while the Local Authority generally has good relationships with the Special Schools, there is a greater challenge in working successfully with Mainstream Schools around their specialist provision.

Equally, strong relationships between schools are required to ensure a full range of options are available as pupils’ progress towards adulthood. It is essential that schools are supported to improve links with each other to enable them to work together supporting their students to remain in their school when appropriate.

Activity to develop this collective approach must ensure links with health colleagues are better developed to work around the agreed outcomes for the pupil. This is particularly important in terms of mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

**4.3.3 Commissioning Locally**

(g) It is recommended future commissioning is based on assessment of current provision and usage, and robust projections of need which assess the type and capacity of provision that may be required. Where new capacity is commissioned, it should take into account current modular principles which allow the flexibility to extend and modify provision to account for changing needs and priorities.

The above points overwhelmingly support the key principle of local schools for local children. Wherever possible, local pupils should be enabled by our commissioning decisions to access local schools. When considering our definition of ‘local’, while for many children who need specialist provision this may mean a school in or near to their local community, for more complex types of provision this may mean a school within North Somerset accessible within a reasonable journey time with appropriate transport.
Budget pressures on the provision of Home to School Transport also supports the development of a wider range of local provision. However, it is recognised that almost all children with complex health and physical needs will use some form of transport – and the siting of any future new facility needs to take accessibility by school transport into account.

4.3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

(h) It is recommended that this needs analysis is undertaken as part of the review of the Education Commissioning Strategy, currently on a three-yearly cycle.

This will enable improved accuracy of projections over time, and enable to the Local Authority to develop a longer term strategic plan for specialist provision which will support our commissioning activity.

Robust data relating to needs and finances is crucial to provide effective monitoring and evaluation of services. This information tells us what has worked well and what we could do better in future commissions. It helps us to plan, ensuring the needs and outcomes of the pupils in North Somerset direct and influence future service delivery.

(i) Determining the full cost of placements in specialist provision has been a very challenging aspect of this review, with various colleagues in finance teams needing to pull together a range of data sources in order to provide an accurate overview. Any commissioning activity will need to evaluate cost alongside the effectiveness of provision, and therefore it is recommended that People & Communities DLT request regular oversight of the cost of Specialist Provision during the year in order to respond to trends effectively.

All of the above recommendations will require effective engagement and consultation with parents, carers and young people to progress effectively. A process for this engagement has been considered and is available when required.

5. Opportunities

In working with schools and other partners to analyse current provision and future need, providers have suggested the following potential opportunities. These are not presented as specific recommendations, but are recorded to illustrate that there is potential within the current market to meet the recommendations above:

5.1 Baytree School

Facing increasing numbers of pupils with the most severe and complex multiple learning difficulties, the current Baytree School building has major limitations in how it will be able to continue to meet pupils’ needs. More pupils are requiring overhead tracking hoists, increased space for personal mobility and other health related equipment. An increase in associated staff to support pupils also requires additional facilities. There is a growing requirement for a purpose-built specialist provision that meets the need of the increasing population of young people.
This provides opportunities for:

- North Somerset Council to work with the school to explore the opportunity to relocate and release the current Baytree school site for further educational development.
- North Somerset Council to support the development of a ‘free school’ bid which the school has already started to develop.

5.2 Westhaven School
A recent increase in places at the school has demonstrated how increasing local capacity and broadening the local offer can prevent pupils needing to travel out of North Somerset. The school is also considering extending the age range of pupils attending their school, having worked in partnership with Springboard to explore the potential to provide for early years, foundation and key stage one pupils.

This provides the following opportunities:

- Potential further development of the existing school site
- Provision of foundation and KS1 and a pre-school option, supporting children who receive an early diagnosis
- Further development of a specialism in learning outside the classroom, with a view to offering therapeutic sessions to other schools in the area.

5.3 Ravenswood School
The school is exploring potential developments to support post-16 pupils with complex SEN. Nearly all of pupils stay on post-16, and the school routinely offers 4-5 places to pupils from other schools each year when space permits. The school has developed strong and positive working relationships with Weston College who often prefer pupils to attend Ravenswood’s post-16 provision first, transferring to college when they are age 18. In order to maintain and extend this effective practice, Ravenswood have identified the potential to:

- Increase places in a school environment which is fit for purpose.
- Develop the facilities to provide short-term residential stays for young people needing to develop independent living skills on site.
- Provide an on-site assessment centre/service to support the identification and assessment of pupils with very complex SEN.
- Should capacity be released at the Tuition site as part of this review, the school could use this to support these activities.

Development of these opportunities at the Special Schools will provide valuable evidence of the potential to extend their good practice across all of the schools in North Somerset.

5.4 Priory Learning Trust

It is anticipated that St Anne’s Primary School will be part of the trust from April 2018. The Trust has identified a desire for the St. Anne’s School site in
Hewish to be co-located with Priory School, freeing the current site for development as Specialist or Alternative provision to be operated by the trust. This would be a complex change which would require considerable engagement and consultation with the residents of Hewish. DLT should also consider the impact of such a move on the nearby St Georges VA Church Primary School and the cost implications of site re-provision and home to school transport considerations.

5.5 **Home to School Transport**

To consider the effect and extent of out-of-area travel, we have consulted with the Integrated Transport Unit. When considering the provision of additional provision for pupils with complex needs and physical disabilities, they would recommend any new special school be sited close to M5 Junction 21, ideally in the area of Hewish, West Wick or Way Wick etc. It is recognised that almost all children in this group will continue to need school transport. This has been considered and it has been identified the inbound access via J21 from all parts of North Somerset is generally good in the morning peak, with traffic flows generally in the opposite direction. Analysis of the upcoming cohort of children with additional needs via Early Years payments data, projects that the largest demand will continue to come from Weston-super-Mare and surrounding areas, with over 50% of children with additional needs located in the BS22, BS23 and BS24 postcode areas. Regrettably there are no sites in this location. There are however two possible sites within easy access from J20 of the M5 that are being considered and could be available for new provision.

**Graph 1**

![Pie chart showing distribution of Early Years children receiving Top Up Funding by home postcode in November 2017]

*Source: Early Education Funding – Payments to Providers, November 2017*
6. **Scope of Analysis**

6.1 This review of specialist provision will give the Local Authority information to understand the current local offer, the likely future demand and different opportunities to managing the considerable annual expenditure in providing education for these groups of pupils in the future.

6.2 We have considered what is currently working well and how this may be built upon so that future provision is based on pupils’ needs and outcomes, focusing on them being supported to reach their individual potential as they move into adulthood and accessing, when appropriate, meaningful employment and independence.

6.3 North Somerset Council’s Directorate Leadership Team considered the future of specialist and alternative provision during the spring of 2017 where they recognised that a more detailed review of our offer to children and young people with SEN was required. North Somerset Strategic Schools Forum (SSF) also supports the need to hold a comprehensive review of provision for students who require non-mainstream school provision.

6.4 This review aligns with:

- The development of the three-yearly review of our strategy ‘Education Provision in North Somerset A Commissioning Strategy 2018-2021’, the principles within the strategy are equally applicable to specialist school provision, which needs to be considered alongside mainstream provision to provide a whole-system approach to commissioning school places
- The continued development of services in response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, which requires all provision to be focused on individuals needs and outcomes in Mainstream and Special Schools

6.5 This report has focused on those students with EHCPs/Statements who attend the following provision:

6.5.1 **Special Schools in North Somerset**

Special Schools are schools for pupils who have special educational needs due to severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities or behavioural problems. Special Schools may be specifically designed, staffed and resourced to provide appropriate special education for children with additional needs.

6.5.2 **Mainstream Schools in North Somerset**

Mainstream Schools are Maintained Schools or Academies which are not a Special School. Mainstream Schools are not selective and will not require students to pay fees. Whilst Mainstream Schools are not specially organised
to provide for people with SEN, they are still subject to the SEN Code of Practice 2014. This means that schools are required to use their ‘best endeavours’ to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged by their disability or SEN.

6.5.3 Out of Area Schools
Out of Area placements may take place when a school in the local area cannot be found that can meet their needs.

7. Engagement

7.1 A number of partners and stakeholders have contributed to this first stage of reviewing our current provision. This engagement will be widened to include parent carers, young people and other professionals once there is a concrete proposal to engage with them on and to reassure them about their current provision.

7.2 Information for this report so far, has been gathered from:

- All North Somerset Special Schools
- A range of North Somerset Mainstream Schools
- Springboard Opportunity Group
- Supportive Parents
  - Provide free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support (IAS) to parents and carers, and children with any type of special educational need and/or disabilities
- Capital Programme CYPS, North Somerset Council
- Business Intelligence Service, North Somerset Council
- Financial Management, North Somerset Council
- Education Funding, North Somerset Council
- SEN Team, North Somerset Council
- Pupil Places and Planning Team, North Somerset Council
- Strategy and Policy Development Team, North Somerset Council
- Historic engagement with parent carers during the SEND Reform Programme 2011-2015

8. Analysis of current Specialist Provision

8.1 As of October 2017, North Somerset has:

- 3 Maintained Special Schools
- 1 Maintained Alternative Provision
- 31 Maintained Primary Schools
- 31 Academy Primary Schools
- 11 Academy Secondary Schools
  - 3 schools have specialist units as part of their schools
- Early Years
- 238 PVIs including Springboard Specialist Provision (now running from 4 sites across NS)
- 10 Schools with Pre-school provision

8.2 Engagement has taken place with key commissioners and providers of Specialist Provision during July – November 2017. This engagement has highlighted what areas of provision are working well and where improvements could be made to have a better positive impact on students, their learning, enabling and supporting them to reach their optimum independence as adults.

8.3 Data gathered at 31st October 2017 from North Somerset Council’s Finance Team shows the following picture of provision type versus predicted spend for the financial year:

### Table 1 - Provision Type and Predicted Annual Cost of EHCP Places 2017/18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Somerset Schools</th>
<th>Pupil Places 31/10/17</th>
<th>Predicted Spend Places 2017/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baytree</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>898,557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravenswood</td>
<td>108.4</td>
<td>757,449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhaven</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>738,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream / Academies (students with EHC plans/statements)</td>
<td>381.1</td>
<td>3,137,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>650.2</td>
<td>5,531,983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Out of Area</th>
<th>Pupil Places</th>
<th>Predicted Spend Places 2017/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent &amp; Independent Special School</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3,101,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Specialist Provider</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>794,030*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OA Maintained Special School</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>496,948*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OA Mainstream School / Academies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>69,064*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLA Special Academies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>79,734*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other LA College of FE</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92,253*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>4,634,001*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These expenditure figures include funds passed to providers as Top Up Funding (TUF), based on individual pupils needs.

**Notes:**
- This table does not include VLC, Resource Bases or pupils attending NSETC. As pupils may attend dual sites, or attend a site part time the number of pupil places required is not equal to the total number of pupils. Where pupils attend an establishment less than full time, they are recorded as a fraction of a place (e.g. 0.2 = 1 day per week).

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2 Predicted spend is based on the pro rata costs of the annual provision for known pupils/student’s e.g. annual provision = £25,000pa student awarded funding from 1 September therefore we expect to fund/spend £14,583 for that student in the financial year.
8.4 The total capacity funded during this period was the equivalent of 804.2 full time places. Fifteen of these pupils are in Early Years settings and of these, three are attending Baytree and one is at Ravenswood.

8.5 When working with schools, North Somerset Council uses a local system of *Universal Bands* as found in Appendix 2. This system captures the complex needs of that pupil for the school and partners to understand how those needs may be met, and enables the LA to allocate fair levels of funding across comparable levels of need.

8.6 However, when reporting by statute to the DfE, the Local Authority uses nationally recognised *primary needs* criteria which more broadly classify the main area of need across the wider population of SEN Students. This data is systematically captured on Capita 1 by the SEN team, and enables comparison across Local Authority areas. In projecting future need, it is noted that the incidence of these broad categories of need remains relatively static from year to year within the population, while the more detailed data on individual complexity of need is much more variable. Therefore, it is prudent to make projections on the broader DfE category as found in Appendix 2.

9. **Analysis of Current Need**

9.1 To understand the current and emerging needs of pupils in North Somerset, information and research was undertaken based on the DfE primary needs criteria in May 2017. The following graphs demonstrate the breakdown of statistics relating to those main primary needs in the different cohort of pupils who attend mainstream schools, special schools within North Somerset and out-of-area specialist provision:

**Graph 2**

![Graph 2: All Pupils with EHCP - By DfE Primary Need](source: Business Intelligence Service NSC May 2017)
Graph 3

Special Schools in NS - By DfE Primary Need
Total Pupils = 271

- ASD 31%
- SEMH 13%
- SLC 20%
- SLD 36%

Source: Business Intelligence Service NSC May 2017

Graph 4

Mainstream Schools in North Somerset - Pupils with EHCP by DfE Primary Need
Total Pupils = 200

- ASD 36%
- SEMH 22%
- SLC 37%
- SLD 5%

Source: Business Intelligence Service NSC May 2017
9.2 This research also showed there were 56 of the 71 mainstream schools who provide education for 200 pupils that have an EHCP or a Statement. Many of these places are for pupils with SLC and ASD (Graph 4).

9.3 Significant differences in primary needs occur in this data when comparing pupils who are attending schools in the local area to those that travel out of
the local area. Nearly 50% of the pupils who travel out of the area have SEMH as their primary need (Graph 5). In comparison, those who attend school in North Somerset have a fairly even mix of primary needs (Graph 6).

9.4 According to this information, if we had more spaces available locally, some of which focus on meeting the needs of these pupils (SEMH & ASD) then we should have fewer pupils traveling out of area and more local people attending local schools. This would also reduce expenditure on Home to School Transport, as many pupils require complex, sometimes individual transport arrangements to relatively distant schools. Reducing the number and duration of these journeys may also have a positive impact on behaviour, reduce anxiety and improve outcomes for the pupils concerned.

10. **School Place Allocations**

10.1 NSC have a statutory duty where an Education, Health and Care plan is issued to ensure that provision is determined in the final plan and that pupils are accessing education placements through this process. To this end, the SEN team are responsible for designing education packages to provide the best educational outcomes possible with the resources available to us. The SEN team use a robust panel process, seeking placements within the local area whenever possible. They match the pupils’ needs and outcomes to those schools closest to the pupil’s home.

10.2 The plan may not always name the parents preferred school, officers are likely to name what is regarded as the best available fit for the child’s specific needs. The SEND Code of Practice places a duty on LAs to provide an “adequate” education to meet identified needs. Notably the LA is not under an obligation to provide what parents may view as a preferable or ‘better’ school place, though there is of course a tension between the LA and parents where opinions differ on this matter. A formal tribunal process is operated to resolve disputes, and a successful appeal to the quasi-judicial tribunal may find the LA bound to offer a specific school place³.

10.3 The statutory EHC assessment process should take no more than 20 weeks and around 60% of NSC SEN cases are completed in this timescale at present⁴. As the backlog of cases requiring transfer from the former system of Statements to EHCPs is completed in the coming months, this is expected to improve. Delays encountered in the process are often related to finding an appropriate education placement. The assessing SEN Officers will in many cases name a “type” of provision which would meet identified needs in order to broaden the range of schools approached for a place, and to potentially speed the process along. However, some parents naturally continue to prefer the EHCP to name a specific, preferred setting.

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³ Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years Statutory Guidance
⁴ SEN Team, North Somerset Council
10.4 Other diagnostic or assessment pathways can have a much longer duration (such as the SCAMP pathway for diagnosis of Autism) and these may in some cases be perceived incorrectly by parents as additional delays in the identification of an educational placement.

10.5 Processes within the SEN team are focused on finding a suitable placement within North Somerset that can meet needs and this results often in consultations being sent to a range of schools, including both mainstream and special schools as appropriate.

10.6 The SEN team, working closely with North Somerset’s Schools, have developed creative ways to keep as many of the pupils within the local area as possible. For some pupils there is significant benefits when schools work closely together with the SEN team to offer shared placement. For example:

### Case Study 1

One family has two children who both have different SEN requirements and require different support to best meet their needs. Two of the special schools and the SEN team are working together with the family to provide them with this support, with one child going to each of their schools. They have a shared approach ensuring communication and updates are regularly shared, working around those students and the needs of the family.

This is providing all with a stable environment, which is meeting the individual pupils needs as best as possible.

### Case Study 2

A student in year 4 started in September to attend one of the Special Schools for two days a week and mainstream 3 days. The Special School staff worked with him, his family and his mainstream school. Within a short period of time he was able to go back to his mainstream school, full time.

Mum has reported this intervention has saved him, her marriage and family.

10.7 All of the schools have a strong commitment to enable their pupils to reach their full potential, meeting their identified needs and outcomes. But, there are sometimes specific circumstances where an appropriate school place cannot be found in the local area such as lack of capacity in local settings or insufficient resources to meet the pupil’s specialist needs etc. When this is the case, the SEN team work with families to see how best their child’s needs maybe met in an out of area placement.

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5 As noted in Out of Area Placements
11. Out of Area Placements

11.1 A significant number of our pupils attend schools and residential provisions outside North Somerset. There are a variety of reasons for this, and discussions with professionals have shown that the decision to access an out-of-area placement is based on:

Home Location

11.1.1 Some pupils live on the borders with other Local Authorities so a school outside of North Somerset may be the most appropriate local provision. Equally, pupils from LAs bordering North Somerset may seek places within our schools which will potentially reduce the capacity available. As part of the process of developing and implementing the recommendations of this review, a detailed analysis of the potential for any new provision to attract pupils from outside the area will be commissioned from the Business Intelligence Service.

11.1.2 Where children are Looked After by the local authority and placed with a carer outside North Somerset, a suitable local placement will be sought in the area where they are placed.

Complex Health or Specific Needs:

11.1.3 Some pupils have individual complex, specific needs which require very specialist provision which is not offered in North Somerset’s mainstream or specialist provision therefore very specific and sometimes unique provision maybe the most appropriate to meet that pupil’s needs. Such provision is often likely to be outside the local area.6

Inability of Mainstreams Schools to meet needs:

11.1.4 On average, our local Mainstream Schools (collectively) are asked to take 1 pupil a week, however, when the school are unable to accommodate the pupil a placement maybe sought in a more distant setting. Relationships with local schools are generally good, but can be challenging around these requests. Many schools work effectively together and in partnership with the LA to meet quite complex needs in mainstream settings, while some schools feel unable to manage these situations effectively. Broadly, the reasons a mainstream school may refuse to admit a pupil include:

- A concern that staffing and resources cannot meet the pupils’ specific needs safely or effectively, while ensuring there is no impact on the provision of education for other pupils in their school. This is often evident when negotiating the admission of pupils with

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6 Link to Para 14.3.4 Premature Birth Survival
high functioning autism, attachment trauma, high levels of challenging behaviour etc.

- Different specialisms are sometimes required when pupils have SEMH or physical disabilities such as profound impaired hearing, severe physical disabilities or complex or life-limiting medical needs. These skills and specialisms are not always easily accessible to schools, even when funding is identified and provided.
- Schools sometimes consider that the available funding is not sufficient for them to meet the high needs of some pupils, it is therefore extremely rare for a school to accept a pupil without requesting additional funding. This does occasionally happen.
- Their school building is not fully accessible for pupils with severe physical disabilities and complex health needs and necessary adaptations are perceived as outside the bounds of ‘reasonable adjustment’ (Equalities Act 2010, s20)

11.1.5 Generally this refusal to provide a place is considered prejudicial to the provision of efficient education, and thus meets the test in the School Standards & Framework Act 1998, s86 (3)(a)\(^7\)

### Capacity and availability of support in Special Schools

11.1.6 Special Schools (collectively) are requested to take, on average, 1 pupil per week. Generally, they are extremely likely to accept pupils where their school or type of provision has been named and work well to identify remedies to any potential problems.

11.1.7 Admissions in the normal course (ie. in the first year of admission or a year where a child transfers between schools) are managed through an annual special school placement process. Schools may often be at their stated capacity, but will attempt to be flexible within the practical limits of their physical space and teaching resource.

11.1.8 Statistics gathered at the September 2017 allocation process demonstrate that North Somerset Special Schools were operating at almost full capacity at that time, despite efforts to expand and accommodate more pupils where possible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Places allocated in September 2017 - all year groups</th>
<th>Total capacity</th>
<th>School Capacity %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baytree</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravenswood</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhaven</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As already noted, current specialist provision is meeting most of the needs of young people with the most complex and challenging health needs, however, it is not sustainable in the near future due to the limitations of the environment. Plus, the population projections for North Somerset indicate that we should expect more children with needs similar to those currently attending Baytree School.

A significant increase in population of young people with the most complex needs has had an impact on our allocated school places in the local area. We can see this, first-hand with our current growing population of PMLD (profound and multiple learning difficulties) in our primary schools, compared to our secondary school population which is more SLD (severe learning difficulties). It is apparent that this trend is continuing when looking at the profiles of pre-school children attending springboard and portage.

### Parental Preference

Historic engagement with Parent Carers showed their preference for their son or daughter to attend provision outside North Somerset because:

- All parents share a wish to see their child in a placement which is positive, supportive and caring.
- Some parents perceive or expect to encounter a negative response from local schools when approached to provide support for their child’s needs.
- Some parents are very proactive and have spent considerable time researching what they believe are the best possible educational options for their children, often discounting local provision.
- Parents and carers sometimes hold strong perception about the specialisms of North Somerset Special Schools, and the types of need which they can effectively manage.
- It is common for parents to lack confidence in the process to access the ‘right’ school place for their child, and to believe that the SEND system is difficult to access and designed to limit their options. This is often challenged by experience of the supportive and needs-focused practice in the SEN Team.
- Parents commonly lack an understanding of their child’s rights and entitlements in terms of educational placements. This is particularly an issue post-16 where there is an expectation that education will provide a full 25 hours timetable.

### Local Authority Challenges

When a placement cannot be found within the local area, the SEN team will look to go out of county where they will approach other LA
schools in the first instance then independent sectors. From a local authority perspective, out of area placement happens because:

- The placement consultations identify local schools are unable to meet the needs and outcomes of the student. It is critical that school places for SEN pupils have to be able to meet needs, so pupils go out of area when a school in the area is not able to meet needs. This can be because the schools do not have resources and would cost too much to enable the pupil to attend etc.
- Generally, when a pupil is placed out of area it is because all of the local options have been unable to meet the pupil’s needs when consulted and the LA is satisfied that the response is reasonable. There are occasions when the LA disagrees with the school response and processes allow the LA to direct schools to accept pupils. Clearly this is a process which is carefully considered, and it not a practical response in every case

Case Study 3

A student in Year 10, who had not consistently attended a secondary setting, had a huge period of absence due to anxiety. They were supported by CAMHS sporadically. They underwent an EHC needs assessment and it identified that he was cognitively able but with huge levels of anxiety. SEN Team sent consultations to 5 mainstream secondary school (all said they couldn’t take him as his year group at that school had already started GCSE courses and they did not have the skills necessary to support him). The special schools in North Somerset would not be able to meet his average and above functioning as they tend to cater for a special school cohort. SEN then consulted with Mark College who identified that they could meet his needs.

He has had 100% attendance since September.

Home to School Transport

11.1.13 Transport often raises challenges both from the perspective of the pupil and parent, and from that of the commissioner. Although the pupils’ needs are generally met by attending the schools that they have been matched with, travelling further either within or outside North Somerset, brings with it other challenges. For example:

- Some pupils spend considerable time traveling between home and school at the start and the end of the day.
- Some pupils are provided with transport to school but having a restricted timetable which differs from the normal school day means they are often not able to use the transport provided to return home, due to different traveling times than their peers.
- Pupils attending provision at a distance from home are often bound to travel arrangements and cannot take part in the
broader life and activities around school, meaning they miss essential social engagement with their peers

- North Somerset Council work within the statutory guidance produced by the Department for Education in July 2014\(^8\) to ensure they are meeting their legal duties, however as these guidelines are not prescriptive on the type of transport provided their can often be disagreements with parents about arrangements.
- Some pupils have complex care routines on waking, which when coupled with long journeys can impact on their readiness for learning when arriving at school. Local provision may reduce the impact of these situations.

Travelling any significant distance to school, whilst necessary in some individual cases, does not support our wider aspiration for Local Schools for Local Children\(^9\)

12. **Tribunals**

12.1 Presently the Tribunal process means that a parent can take the authority to an appeal if they are unhappy with decisions taken within the statutory framework. As a result of this, the SEN team do have a number of parents who remain unhappy with the local provision on offer and request independent provisions. Where the Tribunal makes a decision to support a parents’ request for such a provision, it is binding on the Local Authority and we must honour the decision.

12.2 In September 2016 to July 2017 there were 24 cases lodged in total as not able to match provision. Of the 24 listed above – 3 resulted in an OOA placement against the wishes of the LA and 4 were conceded by the LA, 5 were jointly agreed between the LA and parent resulting in placement within county.

A tribunal is a full day (at a hearing) and around 3-5 days of preparation for each officer involved. Each tribunal that goes to full hearing would cost the authority approximately £5000 in local authority officer and staff time. Tribunals can also place resource requirements on schools and other agencies involved in cases.

**Case Study 4**

A case went to Tribunal where there was a parental request for their child to attend Mark College. By going through the usual process, the SEN Team approached the Local Mainstream schools who said that they could meet need (with some reservations, and recognising a cost of £38,000 per annum to ensure the pupil's needs were fully met)

The Mark College placement cost was to be £42,000 with transport and so, the tribunal were unlikely to find in the LA favour so therefore it was not cost effective to pursue the case.

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\(^8\) [Home to School Travel and Transport: Statutory Guidance](#), DfE 2014

\(^9\) Draft Education Provision in NS A Commissioning Strategy 2018-2012 page 27
13. Financial Information

13.1 The funding for school places is complex with a number of elements which are determined on the basis of individual needs. It has been a particular challenge to obtain clear financial information during the review, and reconciliation of the various sources has been problematic. Colleagues in the Corporate and Education Finance teams have collaborated effectively to produce the analysis in this report, and a recommendation on financial monitoring is captured above.

13.2 In complex cases where pupils have multiple challenges and a range of needs, a proportion of their funding may be provided by the Clinical Commissioning Group and other aspects from Social Care. This is particularly when pupils require expensive, out of area residential establishments. It appears only one pupil among the 157 placed outside North Somerset receives a proportion of funding from Health sources and three from Social Care. This needs further investigation to fully understand the full financial picture.

13.3 The out of area budget is governed by SSF and managed by the LA through school budgets. It is accessed for pupils, up to the academic year in which they have their 19th birthday. Additionally, the LA also has responsibility for pupils between the ages of 19 to 25 who have an EHCP and who may be in out of area placements. The authority also manages this through school’s budgets and through other funding streams for 19-25 years of age.

13.4 The current predicted costs for 2017/18 Academic Year based on number of students October 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 – Projected Cost of Specialist Provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baytree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravenswood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Integrated Transport Unit NSC November 2017, Financial Management Service Accountancy and Education Funding Trading Services October 2017

* Mainstream school transport costs refer only to those pupils who are placed in special units attached to mainstream schools. Pupils with EHCP/SEN statements which joined schools as a result of the normal admission processes are usually accommodated in the transport routes provided for all students, and costs are not tracked separately.

** Please note these figures include Top Up Funding
14. Future Needs

14.1 The numbers of pupils with statements or EHCPs at school has remained relatively constant overall, with the numbers being supported in independent school and educational establishments outside North Somerset increasing moderately, likely due to North Somerset’s Special Schools reaching capacity.

14.2 During work on this review, professionals have stressed the need to consider the wider group of pupils which have challenging behaviours or emotional and behavioural needs who are not currently reaching the thresholds for EHC plans. This group of children is growing, and places Mainstream Schools under considerable strain.

They recognise that the busy mainstream environments are not always the best for some pupils, particularly those with Autism, ASD and associated conditions who often cannot thrive in mainstream environments. However, where needs are identified early and when schools share specialist skills, these children can be very successfully supported without significant additional resources. Our recommendations are based on this finding.

14.2.1 Projected numbers of children with and EHCP\(^{10}\)

Percentages of pupils with a Statement/EHCP at any type of school within North Somerset by year

Table 4 – EHCP Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>Total pupils in NS – All school types</th>
<th>Pupils with Statements or EHCPs</th>
<th>% Pupils with Statements or EHCPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>29,308</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>29,359</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>29,449</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>29,563</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>29,646</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>29,862</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>30,266</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>30,723</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>30,970</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SEN in England: January 2017; Department for Education. Note: data source is the school census, covers pupils attending schools in an area, not the residents of that area

- The percentage of pupils in NS schools who have a Statement/EHCP is much lower than comparators. The percentage in NS Schools had been constant at 1.5% for the past 3 years and has varied by only 0.2% over the

\(^{10}\) North Somerset Council Business Support Team May 2017
last seven years, providing a relatively stable base rate from which to project.

- Projected increase in number of pupils with a statement or an EHCP linked to population growth show:

**Table 5 – Population Growth by School Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Number (July 2017)</th>
<th>Projected % increase of age group over 5 years 2017 - 2022*</th>
<th>Projected number in 2022</th>
<th>Projected number in 2027</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools in NS</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary schools in NS</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special schools in NS</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools outside NS inc. Independent, excl. special</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special schools outside NS</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>610</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>645</strong></td>
<td><strong>664</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * Source: Population projections based on mid-2014 estimates Note: Mainstream Further Education colleges excluded

The ONS population growth estimates will include an element of growth due to the building of new dwellings.

**Graph 7**

![Projected numbers of pupils by type of provision](image)

Source: Business Intelligence Team, North Somerset Council May 2017

14.3 Contributing to this increase is:

14.3.1 New Developments

20,985 new dwellings will be delivered between 2006 and 2026. As of March 2017, 8,847 dwellings have been built leaving around 12,138 to be delivered between 2017–2026. The Councils Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) for the period 2026-2036 will shortly be available for consultation. It will outline key strategic
sites that are proposed to be developed to meet the housing supply needs during that period.

14.3.2 Infrastructure for students with SEND will be requested for each development as appropriate via the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Council’s Infrastructure & Investment Board will determine allocations.

14.3.3 Geographic Location
North Somerset sits between Somerset, B&NES and Bristol. Bordering on Bristol means that some families settle in the local area so that they are able access medical facilities at Bristol Children’s Hospital. For families with children who have long-term or life-limiting health conditions, being near to the hospital means that their son or daughter are able to maintain an appropriate level of education, either by attending local mainstream or special schools. Health have anecdotal evidence that families of children with complex health needs move to this area to be near the children’s hospital but tend to live in either North Somerset and South Gloucestershire because there is more flexible housing stock than in Bristol. Further research and understanding of the true impact this has in North Somerset is recommended.

14.3.4 Premature Birth Survival
It is well documented that as medical science has developed so has the increase in premature birth survival. Research reported on in 2012 looked at the survival rates for babies born between 22 and 25 weeks and how this had risen overall since 1995. The main finding was that when comparing survival to discharge rates between 1995 and 2006, there was an increase from 40% in 1995 to 53% in 2006. However, there was no difference in the ongoing illnesses or complications affecting these surviving babies, including continued respiratory problems, brain damage and eye disease of prematurity. From this, the researchers suggest that the increased survival rates may correspond with an increased number of extremely premature survivors who have ongoing health problems persisting into later childhood and maturity. This may include an increased need for medical care and help from allied services, such as social care or educational support. Their finding went on to say that although the numbers of survival had increased the proportion of survivors with major health complications had not changed.

14.3.5 Further research undertaken in the USA by Health of Dime Charity, suggests:

- Survival before 28 weeks: Less than 1% in the country are born this early, 25% of those that are will have serious long-lasting disabilities with 50% having milder problems
- At 32 – 33 weeks: these children are less likely to develop severe disabilities but have a higher risk of learning disabilities

11 Education Provision in North Somerset: A Commissioning Strategy 2018 – 2021(Draft)
12 NHS Choices
• At 34 – 36 weeks: these children are at high risk of subtle learning disabilities

14.3.6 Early Support
The report from National Association of Headteachers and Family and Childcare Trust\(^ {13}\) has stated that children are less ready for school than five years ago due to:

• *Failure to identify and support additional needs early enough* (67%)
• *Parents having less available resources/pressure on parents and family life* (66%)
• *Reduction in local services to support families* (63%)
• *Reduction in local health services to support families* (57%)
• Almost a quarter said that more than half their intake was not ready for school and 9 in 10 (88%) said inadequate school funding was a barrier to improving school readiness

14.3.7 Professionals state things would be different if the EHCP process was started earlier, with a focus on supporting that child to reach their long term goals. Local and national evidence shows early intervention provided to some of the most vulnerable children and their families does provide preventative support to those where family breakdown could occur due to the pressures of parenting children with severe and complex needs.

Locally, pre-school children approaching school age are supported by various North Somerset Council Services.\(^ {14}\) Programmes such as the LINK programme provide evidence that approx. 90% of Portage children on the LINK programme in Sept 2016 successfully transferred into mainstream school. Parents also seemed more positive in their coping strategies, this was particularly evident in parents of children with severe and complex medical needs and those with Social Language and Communication difficulties/ASD that result in challenging behaviours.

Currently we have a small number of pupils (19 at August 2017) under the age of 5 years that have ECHPs. We would recommend that these are followed and analysed to see if this earlier EHCP focused intervention makes a difference and those pre-school with SEND children who are being supported by other services

14.3.8 Resources
Feedback from professionals locally, have indicated there are changing profiles of pupils currently living in North Somerset. It appears that:

• Students with ASD are experiencing more anxiety related challenges
• More students are displaying SEMH, often exhibited by inappropriate extreme challenging behaviour

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\(^ {13}\) National Association of Headteachers and Family and Childcare Trust November 2017

\(^ {14}\) Children Centres, Portage Team, Early Years Team
• There is an increase in families/schools asking for diagnoses at an earlier age than before
• Lack of early diagnoses may lead increased challenges and lack of confidence and missed opportunities for both the child and the family
• Lack of specialist early years places for under 5’s available to provide early help and support

14.3.9 It is recognised the reduction of support services such as behaviour and parenting support, particularly in the early years, means there is less prevention work being undertaken and less resources available. This maybe a contributing factor to the numbers increasing of pupils who have SEN not being supported earlier.

14.4 Small cohorts of pupils will always require high level, bespoke support – often for those with the most individual, complex and challenging health needs. Their needs may only be met by attending specialist provision out of the area. But a number of pupils that currently go out of area could have their needs met locally by extending and improving what we have and by creatively developing further provision in the local area, as detailed in the recommendations and opportunities above.

15. **Conclusions**

15.1 North Somerset Council and our local schools have a long and generally positive track record of effectively supporting pupils with SEND in our mainstream schools wherever appropriate.

15.2 Due to changes in legislation, statutory responsibilities and the predicted growing needs of the population in North Somerset, the Local Authority, Schools, FE provision and Health professionals need to ensure the processes they have in place are reviewed and updated. This includes promotion and accessibility to support such as Early Help, Multi-Agency Inclusion Support for Early Years through to timely starting of EHC planning, transitions and preparing for Adulthood.

15.3 Building upon the current provisions and skills, we need to:

• Share expertise and knowledge
• Promote joint working around the needs and outcomes of the individual students
• Co-produce future developments with parent carers and young people
• Ensure solutions are both doable and innovative, not a ‘bolt on’ solution
• Recognise that some pupil’s needs will best be met by going out of area.
• Increasing places by having new provision and extending existing
• Support the provision we currently have to grow and become more successful

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15 Education Provision in North Somerset: A Commissioning Strategy 2018 - 2021
16 www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk
• Accessing funding opportunities as they arise
• Ensure the Council and Academies/Schools/PVs are flexible in their place capacities, utilising opportunities to increase provision to meet the need when appropriate to do so.
• Consider that changes that take place will take time so we may require a temporary fix so that we can start to meet the emerging needs as soon as possible.

15.4 This will result in a robust and well managed level of specialist provision that meets the needs of the local area and will positively enable:

• More pupils to stay in the local area
• Better stability for families
• Less need for tribunals
• Improved value for money

15.5 All future provision needs to ensure they are effective in supporting the pupil to access extra ‘time limited’ and ‘outcome focused’ support to enable the pupil to move into adulthood and be able to ‘ensure that every child can reach their full potential’ and ‘to make a full contribution to society and to promote educational opportunities that result in an employable workforce’.

17 www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk
Appendix 1 – Data Used in Projections

Projections of Future Need

In preparing this report, we have worked closely with the Business Intelligence Service to bring together a range of existing datasets including pupil numbers, projected population growth, incidence data on conditions and impairments and financial data. While this has produced useful projections based on the best current sources of data it is important to note that this exercise has not been carried out previously and will improve in accuracy and quality if the process is repeated in future years. This is featured in the recommendations.

Limitations and accuracy considerations

It is important to note the following limitations in the current data underpinning the report:

1. While research indicates that the incidence of disabilities and impairments remains relatively static across the population, data on the severity and complexity of need of current pupils remains highly variable. Therefore, the DfE Primary Needs criteria have been used for the research undertaken to support this report.\(^{18}\)
2. This paper has not considered the growing number of pupils that are just below the thresholds for EHCPs or SEN Support, which is an extremely challenging group to monitor. Future work could useful engage with Early Years and schools around this group.
3. Financial statistics were current at 31st October 2017 and were sourced from colleagues in the Corporate Financial Management Service and the Education Funding Team\(^ {19}\). This is an ever-changing picture, which will be influenced by emerging needs and assessment.
4. Statistical information within this document refers to those pupils that attend schools, from reception to further education. It includes limited information relating to the number of pupils that access Early Years provision (PVI’s) as this group are already subject to detailed sufficiency reporting and projection.

Pupils with a Statement or EHCP from new developments

A proportion of pupils living in new developments will have moved from another part of North Somerset and so will not be additional children. In time, analyses on movement into new developments will be based on sufficient data to produce robust ratios, but these are not available at present. The following analysis showing projected numbers of SEND from new developments is provided for information, but the projections above based on ONS population projections should be used as the best current estimates of overall future numbers of SEND.

\(^{18}\) Undertaken by Business Intelligence Performance and Improvement
\(^{19}\) Undertaken by Financial Management, Service Accountancy. Education Funding, Trading Services
Table 6 - Pupils living in dwellings built during last 10 years and attending a North Somerset school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of NSC School</th>
<th>From new development</th>
<th>All dwellings</th>
<th>Adjustment to new development pupil yield to be applied</th>
<th>Total NSC resident pupils</th>
<th>% of all pupils with EHCP who live in a new dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement or EHCP</td>
<td>No Statement or EHCP</td>
<td>% with Statement/ EHCP</td>
<td>% with Statement/ EHCP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,662</td>
<td>1,673</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2,352</td>
<td>2,385</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODA EHCP/Statement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: May 2017 School Census and council tax records.

Estimated numbers coming from new developments using New Development Pupil Projection Model
North Somerset SEND projections, 5 year, government housing allocation and peak numbers
These projections are based on the current patterns of SEND pupil attendance at North Somerset Mainstream, Special Schools and Other provision (which includes Weston College) and are adjusted according to the table above.

Table 7 - 5 year housing with planning permission or assessed likely to be built projected SEND (Statement / EHCP) numbers (5,818 new dwellings by 2021/22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of pupils</th>
<th>NS mainstream</th>
<th>NS special</th>
<th>NS PRU</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 - North Somerset's housing allocation to 2025/26 - 9 year housing supply projected SEND (Statement / EHCP) numbers (12,133 new dwellings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of pupils</th>
<th>NS mainstream</th>
<th>NS special</th>
<th>NS PRU</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 - Peak year housing supply projected SEND (Statement / EHCP) numbers (over 9 years, peak year pupil primary pupil numbers 2027/28 and 2034/35 for secondary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of pupils</th>
<th>NS mainstream</th>
<th>NS special</th>
<th>NS PRU</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>138</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2 – Categories of Need

A. National Primary Needs

These categorisations of primary need are used by the Department for Education, and are comparable across Local Authority areas:

- Asperger’s Syndrome
- Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Hearing impairment
- Moderate learning difficulty
- Other difficulty / disorder
- Physical disability
- Severe learning difficulty
- Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)*
- Specific learning difficulty (SLD)
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLC)
- Visual Impairment

* Social, Emotional, Mental Health and Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulty figures are combined into one primary need

B. Local Universal Bands

These locally-agreed areas of need are used to support the allocation of funding to schools, and incorporate the above areas in four, broad bands of need:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognitive and Learning
- Physical and Sensory
- Social Emotional Behaviour
Section 2 – Alternative Provision

1. Introduction

1.1 This report outlines the current arrangements for Alternative Education Provision and its ability to meet the needs of children and young people in North Somerset.

1.2 A wide-ranging review of alternative and specialist provision was initiated by the Directorate Leadership team in North Somerset Council as there was a shared concern amongst school leaders and council colleagues that this is an area in need of further development and improvement, following a challenging period of change and reduced resources.

1.3 The review process has included consultation with the following, whose views and professional opinions are shared within this report:

- All special school Headteachers
- All secondary schools, a mixture of Headteachers or members of the leadership team who have a responsibility for children at risk of exclusion
- A range of primary school Headteachers,
- Three Headteachers from the Voyage Learning Campus (VLC) and other key members of the VLC team
- North Somerset colleagues who have responsibilities in the area of alternative provision, children missing school or vulnerable children

1.4 Alternative provision supports the duty that all children and young people have a right to 25 hours of education per week as outlined in the statutory guidance ‘Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England’ published by the Department for Education in 2017.

1.5 This is an area where considerable expenditure from a complex mix of funding streams are brought together to commission services, and it is essential we achieve the best possible outcomes within the resources available.

2. Purpose of the report,

2.1 This report will make recommendations on how all partners within the alternative provision system can work more effectively together, share responsibility for the education of vulnerable children and young people, and ensure that we achieve the best possible outcomes for them. During the course of this work the key themes of Culture, Commissioning, Process and Outcomes Monitoring have emerged, and the recommendations will be grouped under these headings

2.2 This report was developed alongside a similar review of specialist provision in North Somerset. In some areas, there is an interplay between alternative and
specialist provision and some recommendations may be shared between these two areas.

3. **National Context**

3.1 In 2011, OfSTED published a survey about schools use of offsite alternative provision. Many of the findings were not positive. Following this, Michael Gove asked Charlie Taylor to conduct what has become known as 'The Taylor Review'.

3.2 This Taylor Review highlighted a national issue that there were significant weaknesses in schools use of offsite, alternative provision and there was a need for wide ranging improvement. The starting point of this review was that the focus of pupil referral units and alternative provision, just as it is in schools, should be about getting high quality education for all pupils and the best value for public money. There was recognition that all decisions around provision should take this as the starting point.

The Taylor report was:

‘…critical of the commissioning role played by many schools, PRUs, AP and LAs, but most of all it is critical of a flawed system that fails to provide suitable education and proper accountability for some of the most vulnerable children in the country. The Government and the educational establishment cannot continue to hold these children in their peripheral vision.'

3.3 In February 2016, OfSTED published a thorough report, commissioned by the Department for Education, to establish whether alternative provision was improving. The report found that although improvements were evident, there was still much work to be done:

'It is vitally important that schools recognise their responsibility for each and every pupil sent to an external provider. These are some of the most vulnerable children in the education system and the school is responsible for ensuring their personal and online safety while they are off site, as well as the quality of the education provided. The message is filtering through but I hope that this report will help to hit home that every pupil in alternative provision has the right to expect the same quality of education and care that they would get in the school classroom.'

Alternative school provision: findings of a three-year survey, OfSTED, 2016

4. **Permanent Exclusions (National)**

4.1 A decision to exclude a pupil permanently from school should only be taken:

- in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
• where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.20

4.2 National figures from the Department for Education show that 6,685 pupils were permanently excluded21 from schools in England in 2015-16 – the majority of them in the run-up to their GCSEs – marking a 40% increase over the past three years. This corresponds to around 35.2 permanent exclusions per day, in 2015/16, up from an average of 30.5 per day in 2014/15.

During this time, 1185 children were excluded from primary school, 475 were under 7 and 50 were 4.22

4.3 A study by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) think tank claims these figures mask the true scale of the problem, with pupils forced out of mainstream schools by informal methods that are not captured in national exclusions data. The report, published on Tuesday 10th October, 2017 says 48,000 pupils are being educated in the alternative provision (AP) sector, which caters for excluded students, with tens of thousands more leaving school rolls in what appear to be illegal exclusions.

4.4 The IPPR report argues that exclusions are rising because schools are struggling to cater for the growing numbers of children with complex needs. Child poverty is increasing, as is mental ill-health among children and young people, and the number of children in need of a social services assessment more than doubled from 2010 to 2016 to more than 170,000 children.

4.5 The most vulnerable children are most likely to be excluded. One in two has a recognised mental health need. Excluded children are four times more likely to be from the poorest families and eight out of ten of them have a special education need or disability.

4.6 Boys are much more likely to be asked to leave their school, with three boys permanently excluded for every girl. Black pupils from Caribbean backgrounds are still significantly over represented in pupil referral units, though most pupils (70%) are white British.

4.7 Critics suggest that exclusions are increasing partly because schools are under pressure to compete in league tables and exam results, and vulnerable pupils who are disruptive in lessons and likely to lower overall GCSE performance are weeded out before their national tests.

20 Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England (Sept 17)

21 A Permanent exclusion refers to a pupil who is excluded and who will not come back to that school (unless the exclusion is overturned), Sean Harford, Ofsted’s National Director for Education

22 DFE July 2017
The IPPR study says the number of children being electively home educated has more than doubled over the past four years, noting that: "a parent can choose to electively home educate their child. If a school wants to avoid recording a permanent exclusion, they can encourage a parent to electively register their child as home educated. This is illegal."

Some young people are removed through ‘managed moves’ between schools; in other cases, children are transferred to alternative provision off-site – some of which will be independent and unregistered – while others disappear into ‘elective’ home education. OfSTED has recently criticised this kind of behaviour in schools, which is known as ‘off-rolling’.

The national issues raised by the IPPR, are also recognised locally and highlighted throughout this report. As part of the consultation process schools raised a number of issues about poor practice occurring in ‘other schools’, however, no school admitted to any of these practices happening in their own school. These included:

- Delaying decision making in the hope a family will become fed up with waiting for a response and try another school
- Taking children ‘off roll’ as soon as they possibly can so they are no longer responsible for them.
- Permanently excluding children to limit the impact on performance. The national focus on Progress 8 makes it really difficult for schools to show progress if children are on roll, but not engaged in learning or attending. Therefore, there is an incentive to permanently exclude such children and to admit as few as possible who were excluded from other schools during the year.
- Not admitting children in year 11 ‘because they cannot meet their need’
- Advising young people to be electively home educated so they can come off the school roll
- Excluding at a time which ensures maximum benefit from funding arrangements
- Resisting taking on ‘in year’ students

Statutory Guidance on Exclusions is clear that Headteachers, in partnership with the local authority should take all possible steps to avoid permanently excluding young people who are at a higher risk of exclusion than their peers:

‘As well as having disproportionately high rates of exclusion, there are certain groups of pupils with additional needs who are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of exclusion. This includes pupils with EHC plans and looked after children. The Headteacher should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any pupil with an EHC plan or a looked after child.'
Where a school has concerns about the behaviour, or risk of exclusion, of a child with additional needs, a pupil with an EHC plan or a looked after child, it should, in partnership with others (including the local authority as necessary), consider what additional support or alternative placement may be required. This should involve assessing the suitability of provision for a pupil’s SEN. Where a pupil has an EHC plan, schools should consider requesting an early annual review or interim/emergency review’.

4.12 Our partnership working in this area needs to be much stronger, systematic purposeful and challenging if we are to ensure that the most vulnerable children and young people are supported to meet their potential.

5. Permanent Exclusions – Local analysis from September 2017

5.1 In Term 1 of the 2017/18 school year, records show that 20 children were permanently excluded from North Somerset schools. 15 were secondary age children and 5 were primary age children.

5.2 An analysis of Term 1 data shows us that of the 20 children excluded, 17 have a diagnosed primary need (See Part 1, Appendix 2):

- 3 - ASD (autistic spectrum disorder)
- 2 - SPLD (specific learning difficulties)
- 5 - SEMH (social, emotional and mental health)
- 1 - UKN (unknown)
- 2 - BESD (social mental and emotional health)
- 4 - MLD (moderate learning difficulties)

5.3 The reasons given for these exclusions include

- 7 for Persistent Disruptive Behaviour
- 5 for Physical Assault against Adult
- 2 for Physical Assault against Pupil
- 2 for Drug and Alcohol Related
- 4 for Verbal Abuse/Threat to Adult

Source: Business Intelligence service NSC

5.4 Since then, and to 24 November 2017, an additional 7 children have been permanently excluded from North Somerset schools, 6 at secondary stage and 1 at primary stage. This brings the current total to 27 children being permanently excluded from the beginning of the school year.

5.5 Records also show that since the start of term 1 in September 2017, 29 children have had managed transfers from one North Somerset School to another. There could also be additional numbers if the LA has not been informed.
During the consultation process with schools as part of this review, schools gave the following reasons for needing to permanently exclude children

- Aggravated violence
- Carrying or threatening to use knives or weapons
- Drugs on school site, or dealing and supplying
- Persistent inability to follow the school rules and progression through all of the behaviour stages - If the young person is not following school rules, their learning and safety along with that of other students is compromised.
- Move on one child to save the other 30 in the class – there is a tipping point where the impact of one child can spoil the learning environment for the other children in the class. Schools have told us of the dramatic changes in learning outcomes for the class which occur when children whose needs are not met in mainstream provision are moved on.

5.6 Schools also spoke about sometimes feeling they hold on to students longer than perhaps they should, as they are worried what will become of the child if they are excluded, or where they will go to school. This lack of confidence in the availability and suitability of alternative provision means that decisions are delayed to a point where the effects on both the pupil concerned and the school are unmanageable.

5.7 Some schools were very honest and said they can’t afford to pay the costs of alternative provision, or do not regard what is currently available to them as good value for money, if they exclude, the cost eventually falls to the council rather than the school. Experience in other local authority areas shows that where confidence is higher in the quality and outcomes of alternative provision, schools are keen to support children financially and often more open to their return to school.

5.8 Progression from exclusion to the Voyage Learning Campus (VLC) is effectively a ‘cliff edge’ for children: there is little work to assess their needs or potential support available, and a focus on securing a place on a school roll which is perceived as able to ‘manage’ them dominates the discussion.

5.9 Schools also spoke of their surprise that the VLC sometimes permanently excluded children too. There is an understanding amongst schools that the Voyage Learning Campus is the last stop and can hold children indefinitely regardless of their needs. The VLC however, does not say it can meet the needs of the more extreme behaviours, and the perception that they can hold pupils over a long term has changed the character of VLC, causing it to offer more of a specialist provision focused service than a facility which supports children’s return to education.

5.10 Paradoxically, the VLC performed well at inspection. This appears to be based on their endeavours to provide a full national curriculum building up to GCSE examinations for some children, and a commitment to children’s progression
beyond their time at the VLC. However, this model is challenged by the constant use of the VLC to manage complex and often extreme or violent behavioural needs alongside this more traditional school style provision.

5.11 This confusion of roles means that the VLC finds itself in an impossible bind. It cannot effectively perform as both a specialist provision and a therapeutic short stay setting in its current configuration. This is demoralising for staff and results in the VLC lacking a focus on delivering outcomes.

6. Early Help

6.1 Guidance from DfE on Exclusions states:

‘Disruptive behaviour can be an indication of unmet needs. Where a school has concerns about a pupil’s behaviour, it should try to identify whether there are any causal factors and intervene early in order to reduce the need for a subsequent exclusion. In this situation, schools should consider whether a multi-agency assessment that goes beyond the pupil’s educational needs is required.

Early intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place to support any SEN or disability that a pupil may have. The Headteacher should also consider the use of a multi-agency assessment for a pupil who demonstrates persistent disruptive behaviour

Such assessments may pick up unidentified special educational needs but the scope of the assessment could go further, for example, by seeking to identify mental health or family problems’

6.2 Schools do not feel that Early Help is making a difference to children, young people and their families. Although there is clearly work being undertaken by schools to support children and young people, it is not evident that schools are arranging multi-agency assessments and recording them as Early Help in line with their duty. This means that information cannot be easily shared between agencies and a coordinated approach to Early Help to bring together the appropriate support for the child and family is missing. Schools do not feel that there is available support from other agencies.

7. Culture and use of language – Recognising and responding to adolescent neglect

7.1 During this review, several colleagues highlighted a need to ‘shift the culture in North Somerset’. In particular, some talked about the inappropriate use of language when talking about young people in this cohort. Colleagues are concerned that often the child is ‘blamed’ for their unacceptable behaviour without recognition of the level of distress the child maybe under or an
understanding that they may be experiencing neglect or responding to past or current trauma.

7.2 One colleague shared the following concerns in writing to the schools Safeguarding Trainer following an Out of School Panel briefing:

‘There is a culture that was prevalent at panel and not challenged by anyone including the chair that uses language which is judgemental and aligns responsibility for the young person’s difficulties with the young person. This culture does not lead colleagues to ask ‘why?’ and therefore schools are not always readily identifying adolescent neglect …The language used in the meeting at times, was very upsetting to hear, at one point it made me feel that I wanted to leave the room. When I spoke to some about my worries they said that the tone of that meeting was “tame” in comparison to others’

Source: North Somerset Council officer

7.3 The research study ‘That Difficult Age: Developing a more effective response to risks in adolescence’ reminds us that:

‘Maltreatment in adolescence is no less harmful than maltreatment experienced at a younger age. Indeed, quite the opposite is true given evidence that highlights the cumulative harm of risks such as exposure to domestic violence and neglect.

Parental neglect of adolescents may involve more ‘acts of commission’, such as pressurising a child to leave home, alongside acts of omission.

The range and nature of adolescent risks are different to those facing younger and older age groups. For example, adolescents are far more likely to run away, to self-harm and to misuse drugs or alcohol. They are also more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system.

This will also require a more fundamental shift across society as a whole in how we view young people – towards appreciating their agency and the ways in which they use it to fulfil essential developmental tasks, towards acknowledging them as citizens and assets, and towards recognising and tackling the societal contexts that can ensnare and discriminate against them’

7.4 Parental neglect has been a feature of two serious case reviews undertaken by the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board. It is a priority focus within the Local Authority and in the Safeguarding Board’s business plan.

8. Alternative Provision - Sufficiency in North Somerset

8.1 In North Somerset, The Voyage Learning Campus (VLC) provides the vast majority of alternative provision, within three centres based in Weston, Nailsea and Milton.

8.2 In January 2017 the VLC received a ‘Good’ Ofsted report:
‘The centres are calm and purposeful. Pupils behave well and show respect for each other and for adults. It was a pleasure to talk with them. They often work well together. This is testament to the high quality of the work of your staff, who are very skilful in managing the different behaviours and needs of individual pupils’.

‘You provide the school with strong leadership across the three centres that make up the provision. You are supported well by other senior leaders, staff and by the management committee. There is clarity of purpose, shared with all staff and with pupils, to prepare all pupils well for their next steps. Your evaluation of what the school is doing well, and in some aspects very well, and what could be improved further is precise and accurate’.

Source: OfSTED

8.3 The commissioned capacity at VLC, along with current usage is detailed below. This table also notes where students are solely registered at VLC, and not on roll at any other school setting:

Table 10 – VLC Capacity and Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLC Centre</th>
<th>Commissioned</th>
<th>Total Occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20 (13 registered at VLC only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10 (9 registered at VLC only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 9-11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51 (45 registered at VLC only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Service</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35 (4 registered at VLC only)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Voyage Learning Campus

8.4 The VLC currently provides:

- **KS4 (Years, 9,10 and 11)**

There are approximately 25 places reserved for year 11 and the other 23 places are split between year 9 and 10. Classes are small with a therapeutic approach embedded into the whole day.

The provision is designed to deliver both academic and vocational subjects. All students are given the opportunity to study for up to 6 GCSE courses and a wide range of other accredited qualifications including BTECs and ABC courses.

The following GCSE are offered: Maths, English, Science, Citizenship, Art, Photography, and also other qualifications in Motor technical, Catering and ASDAN

Over the last 4-5 years, no young people who have accepted a place at the VLC in this year group have transferred back into mainstream secondary school.
This provision is already full for the school year 2017/18.

- **KS3 (year, 7 and 8)**
  
  A small number of vacant places remain for this group. Pupils in this cohort are more likely to transfer back into mainstream school.

- **Primary places**
  
  This provision is run at the Baytree Road site in Milton and, despite recent expansion, is currently full.

  This is a dedicated primary unit specifically tailored to meet the needs of Primary aged children. Staff in the Primary unit firmly believe that all students have a right to receive an education which is tailored to meet their individual needs and learning styles. The curriculum we offer across Primary is designed to ensure that every child can experience success, achievement and are able to fulfil their potential.

8.5 VLC places are commissioned as full-time school places, but are often occupied only part of the time by pupils. There is no clear agreement on what constitutes full occupancy of a single place, or whether places can be effectively shared to meet the needs of more pupils. Currently 5 primary pupils and 19 KS4 pupils are not currently receiving the statutory 25-hour provision due to their individual situations, and are not fully occupying places.

8.6 These children are often not in any form of provision outside the hours spent at VLC, and as some of the most vulnerable children and young people in North Somerset present a potential safeguarding risk. As VLC funding is primarily used to staff the three centres and is not flexibly attached to individual pupils, there is no simple way of commissioning other support for these students whilst they are not attending the VLC.

8.7 Additionally the follow places are commissioned:

**Table 11 – Additional Commissioned Places**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLC Area</th>
<th>Commissioned</th>
<th>Occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CME</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REAP</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Voyage Learning Campus*

- **Re-engagement and Prevention (REAP) places**

  REAP has been set up as a provision for earlier help for pupils in year 6-10.

  The purpose of REAP is that young people can attend a therapeutic centre for up to 20 weeks. The aim to address emerging behaviours which are having a detrimental impact on a students’ time in school, including those that may be caused by underlying issues in order to reduce the risk of exclusion and ultimately permanent exclusion. This helps give them a break from mainstream school, with a plan put in place to support their transition back into their school. Schools pay a contribution for this provision.
• **12 places for Children Missing Education (CME)**

This provision, is mainly for young people who arrive during the school year from other local authorities, where it takes some time to secure a school place for them. Young people can attend here while they apply for a mainstream school place at a local school.

• **The Tuition Service**

The Tuition Service is run out of the Nailsea site. Everyone consulted with during this review, spoke very highly of this provision.

The service caters for all age groups from Key Stages 1-4 who are out of school. Programmes are delivered in either at the school site, the home, or at a venue in the community. Although 25 places are commissioned, 35 students are currently on role. Because of the nature of the service, children and young people can only attend on a part time basis. Where children are taught at home, the face-to-face teaching time can be considerably reduced by travel. The Tuition Service does not currently use a virtual learning environment to provide teaching more flexibly when a teacher cannot be with a pupil in person.

This provision is full and not able to meet the demand of the children requiring the service, and work is underway to address this in the short term. The current services delivered by the Tuition Service include:

• **Bespoke packages for young people to be taught on a one to one basis**

These young people are taught at Hutton Village Hall. Five students are currently accessing this provision. They are being taught on a one-to-one basis. This additional provision was set up in September 2017 as an emergency to meet the needs of some young people who were not able to access the VLC.

Despite this support being made available to meet urgent needs, it feels temporary and unsustainable. For example, if the teacher is sick there is no contingency plan in place.

8.8 In addition to this, on the Westhaven site, a provision called Pathways has been developed for primary age children, which is sometimes also made available to Year 7 or 8 children.

The focus of Pathways is on therapy, combined with education. The aim is that after some intensive support, children will transfer back to mainstream school. Currently, just four children attend this provision. Schools can purchase places in this provision. Children attend this provision on a part time basis, usually for two hours per day

Provision outside Voyage Learning Campus

8.9 Most Secondary schools have developed their own in house alternative provision to support children and young people who are unable to cope within a mainstream class room for either short or longer periods. This means that
Bespoke packages are put together to support young people and avoid where ever possible permanent exclusion. Young people can continue to access parts of the curriculum where possible, while they are taught separately for some lessons.

8.10 A few other smaller, unregistered provisions exist and are also used. These are often small independent companies who work mainly one-to-one, in a mentoring type role. Examples include Pause and Engage, Impact Mentoring, Education Solutions

8.11 Catch 22 and The Princess Trust are also used occasionally, but these are in Bristol and transport arrangements are often complex and expensive.

8.12 Currently the potential of the school-based and independent provisions is not fully utilised in North Somerset, and the full range of services available is not catalogued. While some limited commissioning between the VLC and other providers takes place, the structure of the VLC’s finances does not permit this as a regular response to individual needs.

8.13 Some limited commissioning between schools also takes place, but this is an area where further development and sharing of approaches would be very beneficial.

9. The Prevention and Re-engagement service

9.1 There has been significant reorganisation of services to support children who are at risk of missing education over the last 12 months. The services available from the local authority have been brought together into the Prevention and Re-engagement Service. The Prevention and Re-engagement Service is provided by the local authority, and provides the following activity:

9.2 Schools Placement Support Service (Funded by SSF)

The purpose of this service is to focus on preventative work with an emphasis on social and emotional support for children at risk of exclusion. A team of 2.5 FTE staff are available to go into school and offer support to all of the adults who are supporting the child as well as working directly with children in the classroom, helping them to develop different strategies to support the child in class. The staff working in this team, previously were part of BIP.

There is a currently a short waiting list for schools who request this service.

9.3 Education Welfare Officers

There is a team of 1.6 FTE Education Welfare Officers working in North Somerset to deliver statutory Education Welfare work. Their role focuses mainly on attendance, including enforcement and prosecution. Given the limited resource available, schools feel there is more focus on attendance and less on pupil welfare. This role also includes a range of other statutory duties placed on the local authority including licencing (sport and child employment) and tracking children missing education.
In addition to this 1.3 FTE can be traded with schools to support early intervention strategies such as non-attendance meetings, home visits and attendance clinics.

A further 0.2 FTE is also funded by SSF to support work with the Gypsy, Roma Traveller community.

9.4 Reintegration worker

This role was developed in April 2017 to support children and young people with the transition from the VLC, back into mainstream school. It supports young people on school visits and then helps them to settle into the classroom. Ideally if the system was working effectively, this function would happen seamlessly between the VLC and mainstream schools.

9.5 Prevention and Reengagement support worker

This role was established in April 2017 to support the work of the Out of School Panel, and to coordinate the support for permanently excluded children and young people, those missing education and oversight of managed moves.

9.6 Educational Psychologists

Additional Support from Educational Psychologists can be purchased by schools on a traded basis.

9.7 There are currently gaps in support around prevention of NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) outcomes and around providing support for pupils with English as an Additional Language.

9.8 There is a clear commitment in this team to achieve the best possible outcomes and to improve the prospects of children with whom they work. However, there is also a recognition of the flaws in the system at a national and local level, and a sense of frustration that they cannot meet the needs of more children within the expected time-frames set by government.

10. Quality - Our Current Position

10.1 There is overwhelming agreement across the whole of North Somerset community that there is a significant need to improve our collaboration, strategic planning and day to day practices for children and young people who are at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream schools in North Somerset.

‘Alternative Provision in North Somerset is broken’

Source Headteacher, North Somerset secondary school

10.2 To emphasise the scale of the weaknesses, some colleagues drew attention to a negative difference between North Somerset and other local authorities:

‘This area is at least five years behind the last LA I was working in. We didn’t have children out of school or not on a school roll. In my last local authority
the PRU does not have a school role – children belong to their school or transfer to another. The PRU should be a temporary position for educating children and young people.

As schools we worked together and had an agreement amongst us not to permanently exclude in Year 11. We even matched our curriculum so we could support children who transferred between schools and had pooled funding to cover school uniforms and transport’.

Source Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset secondary school

10.3 Colleagues across the North Somerset education partnership have been able to clearly identify numerous reasons how and why this important part of education is not working to a high enough standard for children and young people. Although they do not hold any one person, or organisation solely responsible, instead, together they highlight a multitude of factors, and significant external changes over the last three years. All colleagues are frustrated that this has not been given the strategic focus it deserves to date.

10.4 The consensus is that arrangements surrounding alternative provision have not been working properly for several years, despite several reviews into this area. The result of sustained weaknesses in this area means that we now operate a deficit model and that too often, children need to fail before they receive appropriate support

‘It feels like a child has to fail before they get the support they need’

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Primary school

10.5 Several school leaders and NSC colleagues have shared their frustrations about what they perceive as mistakes and broken promises around alternative provision in recent years:

‘Despite several reviews, there has been no visible change. Lots of sticking plaster approaches which are implemented without real planning. Trust has broken down and credibility has been lost’

Source: Primary School Headteacher, North Somerset

10.6 However there is also a degree of realism about the current resource position and an acknowledgement of the challenges faced by the Local Authority:

‘North Somerset is adequate with what it provides, given the constraints. It’s very easy to criticise, but schools need to take ownership for all children. Schools need to adapt to the new world of austerity, shrinking budgets and no longer rely on NSC to ‘sort out’ troubled children’

Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary school

10.7 Another important factor raised by school leaders is genuine and widespread concern that there is palpable extra pressure on families at a time when support for vulnerable children and families in the community is going backwards, rather than forwards. All colleagues point to the importance of
early help for children and most stressed how schools are feeling and seeing the impact of significant cuts over the last three years in the class rooms:

‘We are back to where we were 13 years ago – The investment in community family teams, extended services, BIP family support, local community support was working and it was well coordinated… low-level everyday support for families was working and helping to support families – this has now completely disappeared’

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Primary school

‘Schools need to take a level of responsibility – if we know services are not there, we need to find a way to provide them – maybe by working together.

Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset Primary school

10.8 Some colleagues have expressed a worry that the situation will not change following this review. They refer to the lack of educational leadership in North Somerset, since the Assistant Director position for Learning and Achievement was cut, and a lack of political engagement with education.

A need to establish a new relationship between the local authority and schools came up in most discussions, along with acknowledgement of the importance of needing to agree formally our new positions and how we will work together collaboratively as leaders of education to ensure we appropriately and legally support this cohort of vulnerable children.

While work continues to support the development of a new relationship despite the rapid and relentless changes in both schools and the local authority, this is not yet providing the confidence that there is an effective partnership which is providing for all children’s needs. Examples of positive initiatives which may begin to alter this perception include the Education Excellence Board and recent positive developments in the Out of School Panel.

10.10 There is unease that this lack of a specific, defined education leadership role represents a lack of importance placed on education and a view that education is low priority for North Somerset Council senior leaders and politicians. However, the redefined leadership roles within the authority are extremely broad in scope and scale, and it will be a challenge for a single individual to lead this partnership as has previously been the case. The increasingly complex education landscape demands a more collegiate and collaborative form of leadership, for example the partnerships beginning to form via the Education Excellence Partnership Board.

‘Who is responsible for leading and guiding education in North Somerset? Who has the intellectual and political clout to manage this? We do not talk about how we are going to work together in the future?’ … ‘If there was a group will amongst schools, we would have done it already.

Source: Primary Headteacher, North Somerset
10.11 Through the one to one meetings with representatives from school leadership teams and North Somerset colleagues as part of this review, several different factors are identified below as areas in need of focus and improvement.

11. Areas Identified for Improvement

11.1 Vision and Strategic Leadership

There is agreement that there is not a strong enough shared vision about what success looks like for children and young people who are on the edge of permanent exclusion in North Somerset. Colleagues are frustrated that there seems to be an acceptance that it is acceptable not to have the same high standards and high expectations for this extremely vulnerable group of children and young people as we do for children who attend mainstream schools:

‘There is not a strategic vision’

*Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary school*

‘Our vision should be about all children thriving. It is not good enough to be ‘excluded’ or taught completely separately within a school’

*Source: Special Headteacher, North Somerset School*

11.2 With such a strong feeling across North Somerset colleagues that this is an area of weakness, there is more need than ever for a clear vision shared by all school leaders about how improvement will be achieved together. This will require trust and a commitment to collaborate between schools.

‘As school leaders, it is our legal and moral responsibility to educate all children in North Somerset, we need to agree to a set of principles that ensure no children or young people are excluded from learning’

*Source Headteacher, North Somerset secondary school*

11.3 Several schools have suggested that we agree a set of principles that all schools and partners including the local authority sign up to, with a commitment to support students and other schools’ colleagues.

11.4 Recognise and understand the Changing Needs of the Cohort so together we can suitably meet the demand

Several colleagues highlighted the increase of complex needs children and young people have to deal with and how the challenges affecting them seem to be becoming more intense and extreme.

11.5 Without access to support in the community, and a lack of expertise in school, these behaviours mean that a growing number of young people are struggling to thrive in mainstream provision.

Increased areas of concern include

- Schools are seeing an increase in unacceptable and violent behaviour, which is beginning at a younger age
• All secondary schools have talked about the increase in alcohol and drug taking - ‘not just cannabis’ - and how it is ‘commonplace’ across school communities. School colleagues also highlighted the issue of drug dealing, buying, selling and a drug culture which makes young people vulnerable in different ‘patches’ in the community

• Mental health, anxiety, depression, self-harm are all increasing. Schools do not see any evidence that CAMHS is able to quickly or effectively provide support to children at the level that is required.

• Parental needs – there is a view in some of our schools, that ‘parents have so many needs of their own they are unable to adequately support their children’

    Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary school

• Complex family dynamics – a growing number of children live with their family, but do not feel connected to them or feel they belong to their family

• Poor literacy levels – schools report low level of functioning literacy particularly for children who are at risk of exclusion

• Sexting – this is a growing and complex issue around sharing images and a developing legal context. Although it is legal for a young person to share their own image, it is illegal to share an explicit image of a child. This is not always fully understood by young people.

11.6 For children who are permanently excluded from mainstream schools, the Voyage Learning Campus raised these additional concerns:

• By the time students come to VLC, young people have missed a lot of education, big gaps in their socialisation, KS4 has really low levels of literacy

• Young people have no confidence for learning

• Children who are looked after often report feeling everyone has given up on them, no one cares for them or is there for them

• Some students attending the VLC are sofa surfing with adults who do not have parental responsibility for them. It can be really difficult to track students down in the morning

• Normalising the carrying of knives, or threats around knives, at risk from drug dealers or different ‘groups’ on the estates

• Increase in extreme violent behaviour and an increased risk of exclusion from the VLC

• CSE - children are made more vulnerable through drink and drug taking
11.7 All of these factors point to an increase in demand in alternative and specialist provision in the future. It is essential that our vision responds to these challenges and changes in need, and is not focused on models of provision which cannot support the vulnerable children and young people identified above.

12. **Outcome focused Commissioning**

12.1 ‘Commissioning is the process for deciding how to use the total resource available for children, young people and parents and carers in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way.’

*Commissioning Support Programme*

12.2 There is no commissioning strategy or service level agreement in place for the purchase of alternative provision places from the Voyage Learning Campus or other provision. This means there are no agreed performance measurements or outcomes attached to the funding for VLC.

12.3 Because of the lack of a robust and transparent agreement, each place at the VLC is negotiated and ultimately dependent on whether the Head of the VLC agrees to accept a child into the school.

12.4 Decisions are made depending on factors such as available space in a specific year group, the particular needs of the child or young person, and how that can be balanced within the needs of the year group. It often leads to the VLC requesting additional funding to be able to meet the individual needs of the child.

12.5 This approach often feels like it is dependent on goodwill. It causes unnecessary delay for children and young people beginning school and frustration amongst staff.

12.6 Both organisations are unsatisfied with this approach and would wish to find positive ways to change things.

12.7 On a simplistic level, the VLC feel they are being asked to take students, for whom they are not able to meet need, while the local authority feels that places have been purchased and therefore expect the admission of the child. This unplanned approach results in North Somerset Council not being able to meet its statutory duties and leaves the VLC and the council unable to provide education provision for vulnerable children and young people.

12.8 As we have just one Pupil Referral Unit we expect all children who cannot manage in mainstream school to go there, which is not always appropriate. The VLC is very honest in admitting that it is unable to meet the needs of the entire cohort of children and young people who are excluded from school. It is also honest about its very challenging financial situation.
12.9 Schools Strategic Forum (SSF) pay for 25 ‘places’ at the Tuition Service, at a cost of approximately £500,000 but there is no service level agreement to add essential detail around what outcomes are expected or how this should be apportioned between home tuition and tuition in the centre. There is no clarity around how many hours equals ‘one place’ or how large the teaching groups will be.

12.10 There is a sense that the model of provision at the VLC is not likely to be successful or sustainable in future:

‘We help set the VLC up to fail through default, The VLC is expected to be not just a PRU, but also a specialist provision’

12.11 The service is frequently operating at capacity. When this is the case there is also no clarity of process on how a waiting list is coordinated to be fair and transparent, or how the service will be expanded to meet the growing demand.

‘There is no easy accessible list of who is at VLC on what place for how many hours, purpose and outcomes expected, dates showing clearly where there are spaces’

Source: NSC Officer

12.12 There is concern amongst school and NS colleagues that a number of young people are attending the VLC on part time timetables. This leads to concern for young people’s safety while they are not in school and they are often exposed to risk or engaging in antisocial behaviour in the community.

12.13 Data from the VLC shows us that currently:

- 5 children are on part time timetables in the Primary VLC
- 0 children at KS3 are currently on part-time timetables
- 19 children at KS4 are on part-time timetables

12.14 When the VLC is unable to accept a child, bespoke solutions are sometimes put in place. This takes time and feels temporary and often unsustainable. As all Local Authority funding for alternative provision is locked into the arrangement with VLC, purchase of individual support outside the PRU is based on additional expenditure from already challenged budgets.

12.15 It is also essential that careful transport planning is able to support children’s needs. There are concerns that as the local authority is under pressure to find savings it will not meet the needs of our most vulnerable young people. Transport can be a real barrier, especially in more rural areas where public transport is less regular, and where children are not accessing a full timetable and therefore not travelling at the usual beginning and end of the school day. It is essential that transport is considered as part of the solution.
13. **The range of Provision**

13.1 There has been broad agreement amongst all NSC colleagues and school leaders that there is currently not a sufficient range of provision to meet the required demand in North Somerset for Alternative Provision. Equally, many places within the VLC are occupied – often permanently – by children who exhibit levels of need which would, in other circumstances, be met in more specialist provision. In developing a strategy for provision and a plan for commissioning alternative provision, it is necessary to disentangle these cohorts of pupils and to recognise their needs more accurately.

‘The range of provision is inadequate’

*Source Assistant Headteacher Primary school*

13.2 The range of alternative and specialist provision, needs to be able to cope with the cohort who require it. It is clear that the VLC is not able to cope with all of the children who we need to provide education for in its current form.

13.3 In theory, A PRU should be a turnaround setting to mainstream school. But pupils in years 10 and 11 of the VLC do not return to mainstream school and have not been doing so for four or five years.

Data from VLC shows us that the length of time students have been on roll as at 30.11.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>From 1st September 2017 to today</th>
<th>From 1st April 2017 to 30th August 2017</th>
<th>From 1st September 2016 to 31st March 2017</th>
<th>Before September 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS3 Nailsea</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weston</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CME/REAP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Voyage Learning Campus*

13.4 School colleagues expressed their concern about vulnerable young children who are being passed from school to school and who seem to be held wholly responsible for their poor behaviour by schools who cannot appropriately meet their needs.
13.5 School leaders are upset that children know they are being rejected and express concern that continuous managed moves at primary are damaging for children, especially for children with attachment issues.

'The children we have permanently excluded should not be in mainstream provision'

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Primary school

13.6 School leaders and North Somerset officers are also worried about children with social and communication needs, and Autism Spectrum Conditions (whether diagnosed or not) being educated in the VLC. Colleagues feel strongly that the VLC is not the right provision for children with Autism and there is a concern that this type of specialist provision is missing at all key stages:

'NSC is a barrier to the VLC being successful. Children with social and emotional needs or autism do not fit into the VLC, whether they yet have a formal diagnosis or not'

Source: North Somerset Council Officer

'Why is there not an Autism unit for primary children? These children should not be excluded, but often they really struggle in mainstream schools. One child was excluded then offered 2 hours in VLC…. He needs a specialist unit'

Source: Primary School Headteacher

13.7 Because young people access the VLC almost invariably via permanent exclusion, there is often no link between the VLC and secondary schools. Even more worryingly, this trend is also true at the primary stage, and the VLC has few links with other schools.

Schools who pride themselves on being inclusive really worry about the position they find themselves in. They struggle when they feel they have exhausted all options for support and their only option is to permanently exclude. They also argue that if the balance isn’t right in the classroom, it impacts all children’s learning as well as not helping the child in the long run. The child with additional needs does not get the support they require to thrive.

'We need a much better range of provision for CYP. Schools are guilty of holding on to children for too long because a better alternative is not available, and then not being able to cope, so they permanently exclude'

Source: NSC Officer

13.8 Children on roll at the Voyage Learning Campus are linked to other services and entitlements as below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLC Centre</th>
<th>Child Looked After</th>
<th>Child Protection</th>
<th>Child In Need</th>
<th>Free School Meals</th>
<th>Pupil Premium</th>
<th>SEN/ECHP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (plus two potential)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 9-11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Voyage Learning Campus

13.9 There is currently a gap in provision for children and young people who exhibit extreme or violent behaviour. The VLC, sometimes says it can’t meet their need, or it tries to accommodate them but then sometimes permanently excludes them. There is a possibility that behavioural concerns are not fully reflected in the EHC assessment process, which may account for the low number of students with EHC plans who attend VLC. This may result in them not attending specialist provision which would more successfully meet their needs.

13.10 Currently we have no alternative for these children and young people. The VLC is honest about not being equipped to cope with young people, who are exhibiting violent behaviour, especially without full support of other services.

13.11 Because of the way the VLC has evolved and the way we are currently set up to support children who have been permanently excluded, there is a very hard edge. Once young people enter the VLC, they very often remain there. This is particularly true in key stage 4 and in the primary years. The lack of a robust assessment process prior to entering VLC means that it is often the final destination for children, who are unlikely to return to mainstream school or to progress to more appropriate specialist provision once they are removed from the roll of their previous school.

‘The PRU has become a prison, children do not come out once they have a place. There is no halfway house’.

Source: Secondary School, Assistant Headteacher North Somerset

14. Movement between mainstream schools and VLC

14.1 Movement from VLC back into mainstream schools is not working at all in Years 10 and 11. It has become normal for Year 10 and 11 students to remain on school role at the VLC as their full-time place.

14.2 Colleagues have also expressed concern at how difficult it is for children to transfer from Primary VLC to another primary mainstream setting.
14.3 An example was shared about a young boy at the VLC recently who really tried to behave well so he could go back to mainstream school and even went to visit, but was then told the school couldn’t meet his needs. The boy’s behaviour has since deteriorated as he realised this will not be possible. The member of staff reported that the process of getting the child ready to attend a new school had been long and challenging, and he felt rejected by the school after being told he would not be going to this school after what felt to him like a successful visit. The member of staff was also very upset by this process, describing it as ‘cruel’.

There are however, some examples where this has worked very well at primary and also at Key Stage 3.

14.4 Some young people do not want to return to mainstream for a variety of reasons:

- At VLC they feel they finally ‘belong’ at school
- They feel they are understood and listened too
- Small classes
- More flexibility
- There is a big difference between learning in a PRU setting and mainstream school

Case Study 5

Two children looked after told us about their experiences before and after joining KS4 at the VLC:

*If you are badly behaved at school, it is an indication you need help. You get a reputation for being a bad kid and then you get targeted. It is not your fault. If they think that you are a bad kid you become that person. I shut down. I was bullied and nobody did anything. I was followed home and hit. 7 or 8 people circled me, cut my hair, gave me black eyes and put it on social media. I was kicked out of lots of schools. I have been to Worle, Priory, Broadoak, Nailsea and here (VLC). Uniform and grades are all they care about. I started carrying weapons as I didn't feel safe. People were saying to me, 'I hope you get raped and stabbed' I learnt to look after myself. I had to look after myself. When Ofsted came I had to hide in a room. In seclusion. They restrain for the stupidest stuff.*

*I like it here because they listen. They notice if something is wrong. They feel your mood. In a mainstream, instead they say she has her face on, she is going to play up today. Here they notice that face means something is wrong. They ask, Do you want to talk or be alone? Do you want to be alone with us all or go to a different space? In a mainstream, support is a 5 minutes Time out card and then you get sent to seclusion for abusing it. My school books now are so different. I only used to write the date and a title, now I have lots of work in my book.*

*Teachers bring us together, even when we have had a fight. We are our own little family.*

*When a new kid comes, we settle in and they also become part of our family.*
In mainstream, they always told me off for having the wrong socks on, or for being late or for losing my book. I also used to get into trouble for my parents not signing my planner… I wasn’t seeing my parents. Then I got in trouble for forging my parents’ signature in my planner. Then my Dad gave up, he said you are not learning anything, don’t go, stay at home.

Young people should have a trial here, rather than waiting for them to keep being kicked out. I felt like a total failure schools point blank refused to take me. I thought no one else wanted me… they had to here, but actually I get along here. People want me to do well in life.

I didn’t do work as what was the point, now I am working.

I have been to lots of different foster carers

14.5 By the time children and young people are offered a place at the VLC, the relationship between the child and the mainstream school has broken down irretrievably. This means very few schools receive progress reports or agree outcomes for the young person together. This is evidenced by there being very few children attending Voyage on a mainstream school roll. The VLC primary head has almost no links with Primary schools or other professionals.

14.6 Currently just 12 children attending VLC centres are on dual school rolls

- Primary – 5 children
- Year 7 & 8 – 1 child
- Year 9,10,11 – 6 children

Source: Voyage Learning Campus data

14.7 The number of children successfully reintegrated into school is not currently reported, and it is unclear in the current situation who should monitor this and where responsibility lies for improving the outcomes. Parents of primary school children, often do not apply for a place at a mainstream secondary school at the appropriate time, believing the VLC is now their child’s school.

15. Tuition Service

‘Not enough tuition – it is brilliant when you are able to use it’

15.1 The Tuition service is very well valued by schools and has a good reputation locally. The small group teaching works particularly well for Years 10 and 11.

15.2 In addition to £500,000 funding from SSF, schools pay to use the tuition service, but there is no spare capacity available at present to deliver more tuition. Schools are being advised to look elsewhere but the lack of a
commissioning strategy or market development work means that there is no overview of the availability of such support in North Somerset.

15.3 The current demand for young people using this provision is for long term educational support to support conditions such as chronic fatigue, anxiety and severe mental health issues. Children and young people often require this provision for months or years rather than weeks.

15.4 The Tuition service is able to offer very few home visits, and these are often time-consuming and deliver relatively short periods of teaching for each pupil.

15.5 There does not appear to be one single waiting list for tuition service. One school in late November 2017 managed to secure a place for a child despite others at Out of School Panel being told there was no space.

15.6 The local authority is helping schools put together bespoke packages as Tuition service cannot manage the current demand

‘I have young people who are at risk of suicide and CAMHS have recommended Tuition, not school, but as there is no capacity, the young person is coming here on a reduced timetable, against CAMHS advice, but it is this or nothing’

Source: North Somerset Secondary School Assistant Headteacher

15.7 Another area of concern is that young people who are referred by CAMHS are not regularly reviewed. This means there can be drift and delay in returning young people to mainstream school. CAMHS also often recommend packages which are unrealistic in the current resource situation, for example specifying daily home tuition. This results in schools tending to ignore CAMHS advice.

15.8 Process guidance needs to be updated, clarifying the responsibility for exam costs, agreement when students move on or off school rolls, and other points of practical importance to arrangements working well. Ideally the Out of School Panel would be able to assure schools of their responsibilities very clearly. Some work is underway to put this in place.

15.9 The Tuition Service is by definition working with a group of pupils who require the maximum flexibility in provision, however it is currently challenged in providing this level of flexibility by its partially suitable accommodation and by financial limitations which make home tuition extremely costly to provide. Other models of learning for this group of students, such as a virtual learning environment, may be a more cost-effective way of meeting the needs of more pupils in a much more flexible way.

This cannot replace attendance at the VLC for all students, some of whom require access to a school-like experience to improve their attendance and learning, however the current reliance on this approach will not meet the needs of all pupils and is financially unsustainable.
16. **Six Day Provision and children missing education**

‘*For permanent exclusions, the local authority must arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil to begin no later than the sixth school day of the exclusion*’

Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, DfE 2017

16.1 The lack of a considered Alternative Provision commissioning strategy and gaps in provision means that the council is not always able to meet its statutory duties. Colleagues are concerned that for children who are permanently excluded from school:

‘95 – 100% of children and young people are not making six-day provision and we have not met this statutory duty for several years’. We do not commission enough places to meet demand

‘It is NS responsibility to provide this – our duty, but there is drift and delay. Young people have issues and we compound them’

‘We fine families for non-attendance, and then we can’t supply them with a place. It is often embarrassing and very frustrating’.

Source: NSC Officer

16.2 Council staff stress how difficult it is to explain to parents why their child does not have a school place. There is evidence that other local authorities are able to meet this duty, but in North Somerset this is impacted by:

- Delays around the system, for example the Out of School panel can be two weeks away and even then, there is not always a direct decision
- Schools do not recognise the urgency when responding to confirm whether they will accept a child or not
- Lack of capacity and need for negotiation with the VLC
- VLC do not always attend out of school panel

17. **Children with Additional Needs**

17.1 Although this part of the review is focused on young people who require alternative provision, because of the number of young people at risk of exclusion, or being permanently excluded with an additional or special need there is a considerable crossover.

17.2 There is widespread concern that because we take too long to identify and diagnose additional needs and do not put in the appropriate support while we are waiting for a diagnosis, children feel wholly responsible for their poor behaviour and have their needs unmet for what can be a significant time.
‘The process of applying for an EHCP takes several terms. Some young people are excluded whilst this is being put in place’

Source: Headteacher North Somerset Primary school

17.3 It must be recognised that some diagnostic assessments take a considerable amount of time to complete, and that these are outside the control of the local authority (such as the SCAMP process for diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition which is commissioned by the Clinical Commissioning Group). However, this challenges us to find ways of meeting need whilst these processes are completed and to avoid premature exclusions before a diagnosis is complete wherever possible.

17.4 We also have situations where our primary schools could potentially hold students if we could offer them appropriate support – this is less likely to succeed following the decommissioning of BIP, loss of advisory teachers, reduced access to Education Psychology hours and lack of support for pupils with English as an Additional Language.

17.5 There is a definite feeling amongst school professionals that behaviour is becoming more extreme at an earlier age but still not reaching thresholds for additional support. Several school colleagues voiced their frustrations that the social, emotional and behavioural thresholds are very high for an EHCP and it is often the case that in the absence of other needs or a diagnosis, that a plan is not issued. In these cases, schools are managing behaviour by way of extremely limited timetables or education away from the classroom. This is despite the acknowledgement that behavioural needs are often a result of underlying special educational needs.

17.6 Currently at the VLC data shows that most children are identified as requiring SEN support but very few have EHCP plans

Table 13 – VLS Pupils SEN Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEN Provision</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEN Support</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Healthcare Plan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
<td><strong>Source: Voyage Learning Campus</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17.7 Another issue that was reported by several schools, was that primary colleagues did all they possibly could to hold on to children so they can be part of the school community. Although it was recognised that this was good to some extent, it also can create problems for the child

‘Primaries nurture, but do not prepare all children for managing secondary. It does not benefit the child in the long run if they do not have the appropriate support to enable them to manage in a secondary setting’

‘We have had a child transfer with a reading age of 5, without an EHCP’
There is real concern about children with additional needs being in the right provision to enable them to thrive:

‘The Primary PRU has children with ASD, this is not the right provision for them. The VLC should not be for children where behaviour is the secondary need’

There are several examples of where children require an EBD school, but instead they are offered part time provision in their mainstream school setting, which is out of class. In these cases, families are under pressure as they don’t have any respite while the child is in school. School staff often feel they too are not fully equipped to cope despite their best efforts, and children often suffer fixed exclusions first within their own school and then are permanently excluded from school following a build-up or a one-off event.

One child asked, when settled in special school (at last) ‘Why do I now only have two day weekends, not five-day weekends?’ demonstrating that the right provision is essential to enable the child to thrive or even attend school.

This question was asked repeatedly by school leaders:

‘Why do we have to make children fail, before we can give them the right provision to be able to meet their needs?’

We are seeing a significant increase in the number of young people whose needs are not being held by the VLC. Children transfer from mainstream, to VLC, then receive an EHCP. At this stage, several mainstream secondary schools believe they will not be able to meet the child’s needs. If the support had been put in initially, it is believed many of these children may have either been able to succeed in a mainstream setting or have been able to access appropriate specialist provision, without the additional destabilising move to the VLC.

Several colleagues mentioned their regret that Multi-agency meetings do not happen anymore. These were solution focused meetings of professionals where expertise was shared. Schools are now left with extremely challenging behaviours so they turn to VLC as their only option for the child, even though often, no one believes this is an appropriate setting for the child.

Use of Thresholds to access social care support

There is a lack of understanding when referrals are being made to social care, which leads to frustration from school colleagues at what they see as lack of support. Schools are regularly told that the young people who are at risk of exclusion do not meet threshold for social care support:
‘Support from social care is not helpful – I feel like I am hitting my head against a brick wall. It is especially hard, if the child is not in immediate danger but living in a neglectful situation. I feel like I am being palmed off’
Source: Assistant Headteacher North Somerset secondary school

18.2 However, the North Somerset Safeguarding Children’s Board Threshold document clearly states that all children at risk of exclusion from school are a ‘Child in Need’ (CIN). Children who have been permanently excluded, or those who are not in education, employment or education meet the threshold for requiring a statutory assessment.

18.3 Notably of the 81 students at VLC, 11 are recorded as children in need, 7 as Child Protection and 5 as children looked after, despite their vulnerability to further exclusion.

18.4 However, not all children raised at the Out Of School Panel, at risk of permanent exclusion or those attending the VLC or an alternative secondary school because they have been permanently excluded, are receiving a service from social care. The Out of School Panel does not currently monitor if each child has an Early Help assessment in place or social work support.

18.5 Schools are surprised that children they are really worried about and who are at risk of exclusion do not meet the threshold for social care. School colleagues recognise that to fully support children at the edge of exclusion, a combined education, health and social care plan is required, but suggest that often, even if this is in place, it is still not always straightforward. They cited high turnover of social workers, unsatisfactory care planning with regard to supporting education and considerable drift and delay.

18.5 The inconsistent application of the threshold document means that not all young people are having a thorough assessment of their needs with a plan to support them as we would expect.

18.6 This raises concerns that children who are in need of a social care assessment or who are at risk of neglect particularly adolescent neglect are not receiving appropriate support.

18.7 The indicators for neglect and harm do not appear to be used as part of the discussion between school and social care to describe worries and school has to try and take on the role of Social Worker, carer and educator, without support from mental health services or social care.

19. **Improved Support from ‘Other’ agencies**

19.1 Schools feel alone in supporting children and families and are not clear who they can turn to for additional support and feel out of their depth to supply the depth of support young people require

‘I have never worked in a local authority before where there is so little support’
Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary school
Several schools said they were not sure if there was no support, or whether they just didn’t know where to look for it:

‘I am not sure if there is no help, or I just don’t know where to look. I rely on a Think Family leaflet from 2014’

*Source: Assistant Headteacher North Somerset secondary school*

Throughout the consultation frustrations about CAMHS and its waiting times were consistent across all sectors, (with the exception of CAMHS for learning difficulties, who received praise for offering a really good service):

‘I have never worked in a local authority before where there is such a failing when it comes to CAMHS’

*Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary school*

CAHMS was described as being ‘ridiculous, unbelievable’, ‘waiting list is too long and therefore not helpful’.

‘Primary Heads cannot make a referral to CAMHS, but an Education Welfare officer can!’

*Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Primary school*

Frustration with children’s mental health services is also a national issue and is increasingly recognised as such. A Green Paper is due to be published in December 2017 with a focus on funding for the provision of mental health in schools. The intention is to avoid an escalation of children’s difficulties with them needing specialist services. The government is also providing Mental Health First Aid, focussing first on secondary schools.

More locally, the Future in Mind partnership is working to link schools and specialist CAMHS. Workshops have been booked from the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families.

North Somerset has also been successful in bidding for Health Education England provided funding for therapeutic parenting work. Schools have been invited to awareness on Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP), Nonviolent Resistance (NVR) and group ‘Theraplay’. A number of schools have taken advantage of this so they are better able to support children with attachment difficulties and developmental trauma.

High Impact Families were recognised as a service with potential, but schools feel because they are now expected to coordinate all of the work, it is not as helpful. There are also frustrations that cases are closed when families won’t engage or when the situation changes to meet the success criteria (‘this doesn’t mean the child is now okay’). The HIF model regards attending school as an outcome, and does not routinely provide support beyond this.

Educational Psychology is seen as really helpful, but there is a frustration about the allocated amount to schools. Comments like this one were typical:
'We have an allowance for 3 children to receive educational psychologist support, but I have 14 students who need this. I can't access enough support to give young people what they need. School can't afford to pay for it'

20. Refugees

Colleagues across the system state that some schools are reluctant to take refugee children on role. This can result in drift and delay for extremely vulnerable children. It is essential that support for refugee children is clearly outlined and consistently applied, and this would ideally be part of a charter which schools would sign-up to.

'Schools must be more flexible, we need to make young people feel welcome'

Source: North Somerset Officer

21. Elective Home Education

21.1 Several colleagues raised concerns regarding vulnerable children and young people who are electively home educated (EHE). There is an increasing concern that as schools put pressure on children to attend, those who don’t, sometimes opt into ‘home education’ as a way of avoiding pressure and enforcement notices.

School colleagues would like there to be a central register of young people who they consider to be vulnerable or at risk so that safeguarding checks can be carried out.

'EHE does not work here in NS – It is being used when relationships with schools and families break down. This is not good for the child, but follow up is weak. The system does not protect the most vulnerable'

Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset

'Safeguarding around EHE is so weak. And the legislation is woolly'

Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset

22.2 In addition to this, there is a growing trend of young people wanting to return to school for Year 11 in preparation for exams. There is a feeling that schools are reluctant to accept children if they have been electively home educated, particularly in Year 11.

'We must all routinely ask parents what their plan is for year 11 exams as it can be really difficult for young people to adapt to the expectations if they have been out of school for a while. If not on school role, there is no funding for the young person'

Source Assistant Headteacher North Somerset secondary school
23. **Assessment of need and Support**

23.1 The central support when children are at risk of being permanently excluded is considered weak in North Somerset by schools.

23.2 In some authorities, where it works well, an assessment team is in place which sits between School and the PRU. Members of this team work with the school when a child is at risk of permanent exclusion, and a bespoke package of therapeutic and education support is put in place within 24 hours.

It may be that Maths and English are provided as part of a limited curriculum by the PRU, but in addition to this a combination of art therapists, counsellors, mentors, work experience and other activities are drawn upon to understand and respond to the young person with a package of support and a clear outcome focused plan agreed. This is monitored by the school and the PRU together.

Although the young person might access Maths and English support via the PRU for a limited period, they do not formally join the roll of the PRU by default as is usual in North Somerset.

Outcomes are monitored to assess when the young person is ready to transfer back into their school or to transfer via a managed move to a different mainstream school, but only when there is evidence of sufficient change. If the young person is unable to progress then a specialist provision is found for them. The child remains on the original school roll until they are able to either return or transfer to another school' 

‘We did not have children out of school. Schools work together – no children come off school role unless they transfer to another. The PRU in my previous authority does not have a school role’

‘We pooled funding to pay for new uniforms and taxis so the barriers for families beginning new schools are reduced’

‘Children were carefully monitored while attending alternative provision by the mainstream school and reports comment on emotional change. There is a constitution that all schools in the local authority sign up to’

*Source: Assistant Head Secondary school, North Somerset*

23.3 Another frustration felt by most schools, was a lack of understanding and clarity about what support and alternative provision is available, both when a young person is at risk of exclusion and when they are unfortunately permanently excluded.

Several schools were frustrated that all of the support available is not coordinated and easy to access. They all agreed a menu of different provision, support, access to resources and thresholds would be very helpful.

‘It would be so helpful if there was one place I could go to for support, Leaflet, on line which explained clearly what support was available and how I can access it’
'It needs to be clear what is available, what is the threshold. Why is there not even a list of provision?'

Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School

23.4 Currently, there is no coordination and development aimed at growing the market of alternative provision. There is no clarity on whose role it is to develop it.

'There is no visible management of the market. We know there is not enough provision, who is developing this?'

'In my previous authority schools actively grow the market through their regular out of school panel sessions. With the support of the LA, but it is schools who recognise their duty to educate local children A central list is then held – ranging from art therapists to farm placements'

Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset secondary school

24. Out of School Panel

24.1 Since September 2017, there has been a significant increase in attendance and participation in the Out of School Panel at secondary level. It is clear to see that cooperation between school leaders in this forum has the ability to improve systems and to help develop shared principles between schools.

Several colleagues have commented that the effectiveness of this group and the willingness of schools to use it to collaborate is fundamental to success:

'If you have a responsibility in school for care, guidance and support, this is the most important meeting for you to attend'

Source: Assistant Headteacher, Secondary school North Somerset

24.2 However, colleagues from schools and North Somerset feel there is more work to do to develop this forum. They expressed concern that the purpose has not been clear and recognise it provides an opportunity for change, but suggest it will only work if it has the full cooperation from all schools and the local authority.

They made the following comments and suggestions as part of the review:

'We need to shift the culture. It is wrong – this forum has not been yielding good outcomes for children'

'The out of school Panel MUST secure a place for every child at the meeting. Otherwise what is the point? We should not leave until every child has a school place'
'Schools leaders need to come to this meeting with the attitude of 'who can I take, rather than I don’t want to take any. Being full is not a reason not to take a child'

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School

24.3 Several colleagues called on the importance of all schools to sign up to an agreed set of principles. Without this, misunderstanding and bad feeling can easily arise, which is not in the best interests of vulnerable children and young people:

‘Representatives must have the authority to make decisions about who they can take. It felt very awkward, for example at one out of school panel meeting when a school colleague said ‘I have been told by my Head not to accept any children’

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School

Several colleagues commented on the awkwardness of this and asked what the point of that person being there was being there was. It does not work if schools only prioritise the meeting when they need to either permanently exclude a student or transfer them to another school. It must be a transparent, equitable and child-centred process.

24.4 Other suggestions include formally endorsing this group as the vehicle for improving working relationships and working practices between school colleagues to support inclusion, managed moves and shared principles around supporting alternative provision and children on the edge of exclusion. For this to work, it is essential that representatives to the group have the authority to make decisions regarding principles for working in partnership with other schools. School colleagues also suggest that this may require additional time outside the panel meetings to develop these principles.

It is suggested that this group reports formally to the Education Excellence Partnership Board, allowing oversight by senior leaders in the local authority and network of education providers.

24.5 To improve the way the panel operates simplified and clarified paperwork and processes are key.

24.6 There is recognition that the primary out of school panel has not yet made the same progress at the secondary forum, and this should be developed as a priority.

25. **Managed transfers (sometimes known as managed moves)**

25.1 Currently, there is a general understanding across the local authority that there is not a fair system in place to support children who transfer between schools.

25.2 Although some schools have relationships with neighbouring schools which work relatively smoothly, there is a feeling that some schools do 'more than
their fair share'. The management and implementation of a fair system was widely reported as an area for further development across the authority:

'As school leaders, we have a moral imperative to give children a chance to succeed in mainstream school – a real chance, but all schools need to agree to this as there is no funding for these children, no additional support or input. For it to work effectively we need to have a transparent and fair process in place and a commitment from all schools to agree to the same high standards of care and support for our children and young people'.

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School

25.3 Schools raised several comments on how this process could be improved:

'There needs to be a transparent central log of which school has taken who and for how long? Implement a points system based on the size of school and monitor outcomes'

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School

'Managed transfers should not break down in two days. The very fact the child has been transferred shows they are struggling. They need to be given a fair chance to succeed – they will need time to settle and additional support'

Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School

25.4 Other school colleagues raised questions about the right time to arrange a move for a young person and stressed that this should only be used as an option if the school honestly believe it will benefit the young person to have a fresh start, not just because the school are passing 'a problem' on:

'Offer earlier, before the point of permanent exclusion. Currently, managed transfers happen too late. The purpose of a managed transfer is to genuinely offer a fresh start to a young person. In practice, they have been happening when the young person is at the point of exclusion'

'Managed moves should be an option, not a last resort'

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School

25.6 The lack of consistent agreed expectations between schools, and lack of monitoring is currently problematic, and appears to impact on schools and local authority colleagues:

'Sometimes, when a really vulnerable child is transferred to another school through a managed transfer, I worry the school is not as committed to supporting the young person, if they don't attend, who is making sure they are safe and checking in on them? I would be much happier if all schools agreed to a set of protocols to ensure all children n managed transfers were given a real chance to succeed and to be safe'

Source: Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School
‘I have a child on week 12 of a managed transfer – it is hard going, but we are making progress. I have no funding for this child, but I know if I say we can’t manage, the original school will exclude him – This system is a mess. Funding is a mess’

Source: Assistant Headteacher, North Somerset Secondary School

‘We had one child on a managed move to another school. He never went. He was out of school for one year’

Source: Headteacher Secondary School North Somerset

‘Managed transfers are not working so well at primary. Some schools are more forgiving – we need guidelines for all schools to agree too’

Source: NSC Officer

25.7 Managed moves are integral to success of swift and successful fresh starts for children and young people, but the management and agreement of expectations needs to be more strategic, systematically monitored, and carefully and consistently applied.

25.8 At the time of arranging a managed move, a contingency plan should be put in place in case the move breaks down. This will avoid a potential crisis, and ensure that support does not need to be re-planned from scratch where all parties are signed up to a plan. This should build on the process for Managed Moves which was shared with Assistant Secondary Heads in September 2017 with a draft Protocol included in Noticeboard during November 2017.

26. Costs and Value for Money

26.1 The following tables show the three-year projections for income and expenditure for the VLC. A breakdown of the proportion of costs which cover staffing is also shown to illustrate the inflexibility of the VLC’s financial situation. The information provided was submitted this year as the VLC’s three-year projection.

26.2 Three year projections

This table shows income projections, and assumes a continuation of funding from all current sources including SSF.

Currently, monthly monitoring by the Schools Finance Team shows that actual top up funding is currently higher and is predicted to be £668,922, by March 2018. Pupil premium and sports funding is also marginally higher than predicted
Table 14 – VLC Income Projections

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<th>2017/18</th>
<th>2018 - 19</th>
<th>2019 -20</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>£</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delegated budget share</td>
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<tr>
<td>Top up funding</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil &amp; Sports Premium</td>
<td>45,095</td>
<td>45,095</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioned Income</td>
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<td>Other funding</td>
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<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2,213,935</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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*Source: Financial Management Service*

Table 15 – VLC Projected Expenditure and Outgoings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017 – 18</th>
<th>2018 - 19</th>
<th>2019 - 20</th>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditure</td>
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<td>£</td>
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<td>Teaching Staff</td>
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<td>1,364,108</td>
<td>1,368,238</td>
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<td>Support Staff</td>
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<td>Apprenticeship Levy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supply</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other staffing costs</td>
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<td><strong>Total Staffing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2,368,814</strong></td>
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<td>Premises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplies and services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuition Recharges</td>
<td>(147,185)</td>
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<td>Loans and Grants</td>
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<td>Dual Roll</td>
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<td>Transport Recharges</td>
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<td><strong>Total Budget</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,213,846</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,229,156</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,253,285</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Financial Management Service*

26.3 This table shows that the current budget is carrying a deficit which is projected to increase rather than decrease over the next three years. There is little flexibility on how the funding can be spent.
Table 16 – VLC Projected Deficit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>89</th>
<th>(15,221)</th>
<th>(39,350)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BFWD/(Deficit) from previous year</td>
<td>(413,701)</td>
<td>(413,612)</td>
<td>(428,833)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Projected carry forward / deficit/ balanced</strong></td>
<td>(413,612)</td>
<td>(428,833)</td>
<td>(468,183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non staffing inflation (Supplies, services and premises)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowable carry forward</td>
<td>221,394</td>
<td>221,394</td>
<td>221,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excess Balance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Financial Management Service*

26.4 This table shows the breakdown of the predicted costs for staffing as a percentage of the total expenditure:

Table 16 – VLC Staffing Costs as Proportion of Total Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of budget Teaching staff</th>
<th>61%</th>
<th>61%</th>
<th>61%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of budget on support staff</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Financial Management Service*

26.5 A banding system operates to ensure fair allocation of Top Up Funding to pupils according to need. All pupils attending the VLC are funded as a general rule on band C2.

The funding bands are broken down below:

Scale
- C1 - £12,405
- C2 - £16,620
- C3 - £26,055
- C4 - £32,678

The VLC is paid £800,000 in advance to provide 80 places. Each individual admission then attracts the difference between the £10,000 pre-paid and the band to which they are allocated. The VLC receives the full payment regardless of the timetable of the pupil admitted.
26.6 Currently, 15 pupils are currently funded on C3 and 7 pupils are currently funded on C4.

26.7 School leaders often say if they were given C2 funding directly when children were at risk of exclusion, they would be able to use the additional funding to support the child in mainstream school, sometimes avoiding a permanent exclusion. School leaders commented that they don’t feel this system is totally transparent and that sometimes this has appeared to be possible. However, they don’t understand how they can consistently access this option.

26.8 School leaders have expressed concern about their school budgets, they understand that in theory funding has transferred to schools, but several times the point was made that ‘Whatever they say…the funding has not transferred to schools’.

26.9 The VLC believe that the cost of providing a place in real terms has gone down. They are aware that Teachers timetables are packed and they no longer have any capacity to do necessary one-to-one time with students, or to fund as many school trips.

26.10 The VLC building on the Oldmixon estate costs £65,000 per year and the VLC is responsible for the cost of most repairs. The lease is due for renewal in September 2020.

26.11 The Nailsea Tuition building has wheelchair access into the class room but not to the recreation room, which restricts its practical use for some of the students who would benefit from attending the Tuition Service.

27. Options and recommendations

Culture

27.1 Visible and active leadership from senior directorate, corporate and political leaders within North Somerset Council is required to address the issues raised in this report. There is a potential for a strong, collegiate leadership group to emerge across schools and the council, but equally this requires concerted strategic leadership – especially as the wider system recovers from huge challenges and changes.

In North Somerset, there is no longer a specific Assistant Director responsible for the leadership of education and this leaves a perceived gap. Currently, there are no senior leaders or politicians actively promoting our vision for children’s education and championing high expectations from our schools, especially for this cohort of extremely vulnerable children and young people.

The focus must be on

- A shared understanding that it is our most vulnerable children and young people who are most likely to be permanently excluded from school (One in two has a recognised mental health need. are four times more likely to
be from the poorest families and eight out of ten of them have a special education need or disability') and it is our legal and moral responsibility to advocate for and support these young people appropriately

- Our expectation that all children and young people have access to 25 hours of education provision, including from day six when children have been permanently excluded.

27.2 A North Somerset ambitious vision for Alternative Provision, is agreed by senior leaders in North Somerset, backed up by a charter, which includes, principles and protocols to which all schools and providers sign-up.

The focus must be on:

- As high expectations for this cohort as we have for all children
- The reduction of permanent exclusions for all children and young people, but particularly children looked after, pupils in year 11 and children with EHCP plans.
- Agreeing and implementing key processes and procedures which ensure that no child is ‘forgotten’ or ‘stuck’ in the system, and which broker fair arrangements between schools and alternative and specialist providers moving this from an informal agreement to a more structured approach.
- More children returning from alternative provision to appropriate mainstream or specialist settings, as necessary.

Commissioning

27.3 A comprehensive Commissioning Framework is developed for alternative provision including plans to broaden the market and to increase the options available to schools at both Early Help and point of exclusion

The framework will take account of areas where schools have told us need is greatest, including:

- the increase in specialist Provision will be developed to include SEMH, and Autistic Spectrum Condition
- students may need to access specialist provision which meets their identified needs, ideally via Education Health and Care planning, rather than remaining long-term at the Voyage Learning Campus
- Suitable provision for young people who exhibit violent and aggressive behaviours to other young people and staff is in place, which is separate from the provision focused on vulnerable young people who are being supported to return to school. Attempting to co-educate these cohorts at the Voyage Learning Campus has compromised outcomes for both groups, and has proved frustrating for staff.
- Adequate provision for all children and young people so they can access 25 hours of provision after the sixth day. In many cases, while education provision may be limited by the issues they are currently facing,
therapeutic work to improve emotional health and wellbeing, and supporting a return to school may be the most effective use of resource post-exclusion and may support us in achieving the statutory duty to these pupils. This will also support families of vulnerable pupils who cannot manage their needs at home effectively, and will reduce their involvement in antisocial behaviour while out of school.

- A tuition service that is able to meet the needs of all young people who require it. While this is currently delivered effectively to those who are able to attend the Voyage Learning Campus, there is also potential to provide a more comprehensive offer at home or electronically via a suitable virtual learning environment.

27.4 A refocusing of our PRU provision towards short term therapeutic and solution based support, with an aim of increasing the number of pupils who either return to a mainstream school settings or transfer to a specialist provision, rather than long term education at the VLC.

Ideally, the PRU will form an ‘assessment centre’ approach, somewhere that young people can access a range of support services and therapies to help them understand their issues and where plans are put together to help the young people return to mainstream school, or instead move to a specialist provision.

This will move the VLC away from being the default provision for all young people who cannot manage in mainstream school, and result in the VLC far more often working in partnership with schools and other providers of therapies and support to deliver planned outcomes.

27.5 The KS4 provision at the Voyage Learning Campus has effectively become a standalone specialist educational setting, and pupils who attend generally remain there to complete their statutory education. OfSTED regarded the KS4 provision highly during their inspection. However, the KS4 provision is also required to admit part-time pupils with a range of challenging behaviours and continuing issues who are not yet ready to benefit from the support the setting offers. These young people would benefit from a more suitable specialist provision which is designed to meet their needs.

27.6 Further investigation is carried out to unpick funding arrangements. Currently, additional funding is provided to support excluded pupils who attend the Voyage Learning Campus, which provides an incentive to seek exclusion to meet challenging needs. Schools have told us that they could in some cases continue to support the child, bringing in alternative provision as needed, if this funding was available to them. This may reduce the number of exclusions, and will allow the Voyage Learning Campus to better develop its offer to support those who need to attend, as opposed to being the only option for excluded pupils.
27.7 Support for schools to share and market their internal support across the local partnership. We have noted a number of positive, outcomes focused models of support which work well within schools, and a willingness to offer these solutions as part of a local market. However, current arrangements around exclusion mean that there is little incentive for schools to share provision in this way and very limited forms of support for those excluded. Providing that funding issues are address as noted above, there is the potential for a diverse marketplace of alternative provision and interventions which meet a greater variety of needs.

Process

27.8 The Out of School Panel has developed in recent times to become a well-attended forum, with members showing a commitment and passion to support children to achieve their potential. It is recommended that the panel is strengthened and developed to become the single point of discussion between schools and the local authority regarding children at risk of exclusion. The panel be made up of school leaders who have the authority to make decisions on behalf of their school. This will provide transparency, fairness and clarity of planning across the area, and will ensure that the vision for alternative provision is fully implemented.

27.9 It is also recommended that the panel reports regularly to the Education Excellence Partnership, to provide oversight and strategic governance.

The focus of the panel will be on:

- Working to the principles agreed in the Charter
- Improved working relationships between schools, which are coordinated centrally
- Additional meeting time to embed our vision across our school partnerships about how we support vulnerable students

27.10 Provision of professional development resources to schools around issues such as trauma, attachment, and neglect to support them in their work with students who may face exclusion.

27.11 All children at risk of exclusion are regarded in North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board’s threshold document as ‘children in need’\(^{23}\). We have noted that due to differences in terminology, language and perception, when schools report children at risk of exclusion, they are rarely regarded as meeting social care thresholds and thus schools are now less likely to report this to social care. We recommend that the current training being provided to schools and social care teams on neglect is developed to encourage shared language, terminology and recognition of adolescent neglect, in order that we meet our statutory duties to these young people both prior to exclusion, and as they progress through the system.

\(^{23}\) Children Act 1989, s17
Outcomes Monitoring

27.12 It is recommended that permanent exclusion data is monitored by the Education Excellence Board with a particular focus on Children Looked After, those in Year 11 and those with an EHCP, and that the findings support the work of the Out of School Panel to secure the best possible placements for all vulnerable children.

27.13 The monitoring of sufficiency of Alternative Provision, including an assessment of the maturity and breadth of the market of provision outside the Voyage Learning Campus should form part of the Education Commissioning Strategy, and will therefore be regularly reviewed.

27.14 The finances of the Voyage Learning Campus are an increasing concern, as the setting carries a significant deficit which is growing. Any change in alternative provision needs to be carefully monitored to manage any impacts on VLC finances, with regular reports to DLT to ensure these impacts are fully understood by the Finance Business Partner.
Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the colleagues below who have given their time, views and candour in developing this report and in ensuring the needs of vulnerable children in North Somerset continue to be at the forefront of our concerns:

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- Edward Bowen Roberts, Headteacher, Baytree School
- Shelley Caldwell, Principal Social Worker, North Somerset Council
- Neville Coles, Executive Principal, The Priory Learning Trust
- Philippa Clark, Headteacher, Ravenswood School
- Andrea Curran, Uphill Primary School
- Nick Donnelly, Principal Voyage Learning Campus
- Dan East, Assistant Headteacher, Backwell School
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- Liz Gilmour, Reintegration Worker, North Somerset Council
- Adam Griffin, Vice Principal and Safeguarding Lead, Worle School
- Emma Gundry, Deputy Headteacher, Broadoak Mathematics and Computing College
- EWS team, North Somerset Council
- Tony Hill, Vice Principal, Voyage Learning Campus
- Stephanie Hyde, School Admissions Officer, North Somerset Council
- Gill Hinton, Information and Advice Officer, North Somerset Council
- Joanna Harris, CEO, Springboard Opportunity Group
- Mark Hemmings, Children’s Commissioning Lead, North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group
- Jane Hicks, Head of Learning Support, NSETC
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- Lyn Hunt, Headteacher, Windwhistle Primary School
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• Tony Searle, Principal, Hans Price Academy
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• Sarah Triggle-Wells, SEN Operational Lead, North Somerset Council
• SPS team
• Substance Advice Service
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• Sarah Trevitt, IS/IASS North Somerset Co-ordinator, Supportive Parents
• Sally Varley, Service Leader – Strategic Planning & Governance, North Somerset Council
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• Jamie Williams, Assistant Headteacher, Clevedon School
• Howard Wilson, YOS, Restorative Justice Supervision Manager, North Somerset Council
• Primary Headteachers at the Primary Out of School Panel
• All members of the Secondary Out of School Panel