# **Proposed changes to Warwickshire’s Designated Speech and Language Provision – Information for Consultation**

## Introduction

Warwickshire Council is proposing making a number of changes to existing Designated Speech and Language Provision (DSLP) for children with Specific Language Impairments (SLI) in six locations across the County. These changes form part of the Council’s Strategy for Vulnerable Learners, which can be found on the Council’s [website](https://democratic.warwickshire.gov.uk/Cmis5/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=HYJvU2%2FzOiKGEudcm0TeIF3x0eNtJw%2B1Uq3QX%2FEuVRji9VftMSFt0w%3D%3D&rUzwRPf%2BZ3zd4E7Ikn8Lyw%3D%3D=pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2FLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%25).

Before making any changes to provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) the Council is required to carry out public consultation.

This document provides the background to these proposals. You are invited to respond via the questionnaire on the ‘Ask Warwickshire’ website here:

<https://askwarks.wordpress.com/>

## A summary of the proposals

We are proposing changes to the existing DSLP settings at six schools in Warwickshire. The changes will mean that the places available at these schools are available to children based with a broader range of communication and interaction needs and are not solely restricted to children with a Specific Language Impairments (SLI).

The changes will also ensure that children can receive the support they need from Speech and Language Therapy services across a range of school settings, including their local schools, without the need to travel to one of these six schools.

The changes will be phased so that children currently using these DSLP settings will be able to stay until they are due to leave.

## How do these proposals fit with our overall plan for improving Special Education Needs provision across the County?

In the past twelve months the Council has been investigating Special Educational Needs (SEN) across Warwickshire and consulted with head teachers and other professionals about the new learning opportunities we need to offer. As well as existing plans for building and enlarging special schools, we are also in the process of developing improved facilities for children with SEN by developing resourced SEN provision to meet needs in a mainstream school setting. Over the next two years the County is planning further investment in its SEN services to ensure it is best able to meet the needs of the County’s most vulnerable learners by ensuring there is specialist provision in every district of Warwickshire.

Our priorities are as follows:

* Ensuring the needs of all learners can be met fairly, based on their needs, regardless of where they live in our County.
* Meeting the increasing demand for school places and ensuring that schools offer a variety of facilities to meet the complex needs of children
* Making more SEN facilities available in mainstream schools so that children will have a wider choice of education options locally
* Providing local SEN places so that fewer children will need to travel out of the county to go to school
* Reducing the cost of transport to the Local Authority, and the impact for families in taking children to and from SEN schools outside of their local area

Plans are already in place to deliver 5 new provisions to accommodate children with SEN in mainstream schools by September 2016, with plans under development to develop a further 5 settings the following year. Pupils will have access to specialist support and will be able to experience varying levels of integration into the mainstream school depending on their individual needs. A short summary of these developments is provided below in Appendix 1.

## 2015 Review of Warwickshire’s Speech, Language & Communication Needs Services Services

We have recently completed out a joint review of all speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) services together with our colleagues in Health. This has resulted in a number of recommendations including those within this document. A full copy of the review document is available along with this consultation paper.

These recommendations are not the subject of this consultation but are summarised below in Appendix 2 as background information.

## Which provision would be affected?

Warwickshire Council currently operates six Designated Speech and Language Provision (DSLP) settings for children with Specific Language Impairments (SLI) at the following schools:

| Designated Base | Key Stage(s) | Capacity | Occupancy  (2015-16) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bilton Infant School – Rugby | 1 | 10 | 8 |
| Bishopton Primary School - Stratford | 1&2 | 10 | 10 |
| Clapham Terrace Primary School - Leamington Spa | 1&2 | 15 | 14 |
| Middlemarch Junior School – Nuneaton | 2 | 10 | 8 |
| Stockingford Primary School – Nuneaton | 1 | 10 | 7 |
| Weddington Primary School - Nuneaton | 1&2 | 15 | 6 |
| TOTAL |  | 70 | 53 |

## What is SLI?

Specific Language Impairment or SLI is a type of speech, language and communication need (SLCN). Children with SLI are usually as able and healthy as other children, with one exception; they have enormous difficulty talking and understanding language. This is their main area of difficulty. Children with SLI may:

* Have difficulty saying what they want to, even though they have ideas
* Talk in sentences but be difficult to understand
* Sound muddled; it can be difficult to follow what they are saying
* Find it difficult to understand words and long instructions
* Have difficulty remembering the words they want to say
* Find it hard to join in and follow what is going on in the playground
* Have difficulty accessing the curriculum

# What are the proposed changes?

1. Change entry criteria for DSLP settings to include children with a wider range of communication & interaction difficulties

The Council wants to change the entry criteria for these settings to accept learners with a range of communication and interaction difficulties including children with autism spectrum disorders and other social and communication difficulties.

### Why do we want to make this change?

1. Some of the learners currently attending these settings could have their needs met in their local schools with support from specialist staff and adaptations, where necessary, to the school environment.
2. This would mean that these children were able to attend their local school alongside their siblings and other local families and reduce the inconvenience and disruption of unnecessary travel for young children. This would give children and families more choice.
3. These children would still receive outreach support from the Council’s Specific Language Disorder Team through outreach as well as from Speech and Language Therapists (as appropriate).
4. The change would also enable us to address another issue; currently some learners with a wider range of needs are unable to access the DSLPs as these settings focus exclusively on Specific Language Impairments to the exclusion of children with similar language problems who also have other difficulties.
5. There are increasing numbers of learners with other Special Educational Needs (SEN) who struggle to cope in mainstream classrooms and who fail to make expected academic progress. There is a particular lack of provision for learners with a range of communication and interaction difficulties including autism spectrum disorders and other social and communication difficulties.
6. These learners are currently not well served by Warwickshire’s educational system and there is an urgent need to create additional specialist provision that is flexible enough to work with children with a range of needs. Changing the entry criteria for these existing settings to accept a wider range of communication and interaction needs will give better support for these learners. The criteria will be for pupils with statements of SEN or Education Health and Care Plans and will have significant levels of need, but with the right support they are able to access the mainstream curriculum and are not therefore suitable for the County’s Special Schools.
7. Recent needs analysis has identified that speech language and communication needs (SLCN) are not being identified in the County’s schools, with significantly lower than expected levels of identification. By ensuring specialist expertise is spread more evenly we will be better able to develop every school’s ability to identify needs earlier and intervene more effectively.

### What will happen to the learners currently attending the DSLPs?

1. We do not want to create unnecessary disruption for the learners already attending these settings. Pupils would be able to continue their education in their current placement with the same level of support until their next key stage transition. The changes to the provision will be phased in over the next few years as new learners are admitted to the provision.
2. Most of the learners in the DSLP provision spend the majority of their time in class alongside their peers and attend the setting to access specialist support. This will remain unchanged until they reach the end of their time in their current setting when they would be re-assessed and might not be prioritised for a specialist placement at the next key stage.
3. Under these proposals, learners with an SLI would not necessarily be offered a place in a DSLP setting; many would be offered the support they need in their local school. Those with the highest level of needs or those with a range of different needs would still be eligible for a place in the new resourced SEN provision for children with communication and interaction difficulties.[[1]](#footnote-1)

### Will this mean a reduced level of support for the type of learners currently attending the DSLPs?

1. Currently the learners in DSLPs receive a very high level of support and a very high proportion of the overall budget for Speech and Language support. The DSLPs are not at capacity as there are empty spaces, partly because many parents offered a place choose instead to send their children to their local schools. There is a lack of provision for learners with broader communication needs across the county.
2. Support available across the county is not used fairly or allocated based on need. Children with significant communication and interaction difficulties as well as language problems too often do not have their needs adequately met.
3. Under these proposals those who receive this support in mainstream schools will still receive regular input as required from specialist teachers and Speech and Language Therapists but due to the challenge of covering a large geographical area this will be at a lower level than is currently possible within the DSLP settings.
4. Children attending a DSLP base currently receive on average 90 minutes of 1:1 or small group face to face time with a Speech and Language Therapist per week; this amounts to 58 hours a year.
5. In comparison under current arrangements on outreach the minimum time allocation for a child with ‘high’ needs is 12 hours a year of Speech and Language Therapist time
6. Under proposed arrangements children would receive between 12 - 20 hours SLT per child per year; the individual allocation would be dependent on need.[[2]](#footnote-2)
7. This change is not about making savings to the total amount being spent but it does represent a redistribution of resources to ensure that learners with the highest level of communication and interaction difficulties receive their fair share of support.
8. Transfer management of the settings to schools

Currently the DSLPs are operated by Council staff from the Integrated Disability Service (IDS). The Council is proposing that the governing bodies of the host schools should be offered the option of taking over direct management of these settings including the staff. The Council would continue to provide specialist advice and support through its outreach support services but their role would be to provide guidance and advice to schools rather than to provide education directly. This would have no impact on staff terms and conditions as they would remain local authority employees; it would simply mean a change of line management.

This proposal will not impact on Speech and Language Therapists who are employed by South Warwickshire Foundation Trust

### Why do we want to make this change to this provision?

Warwickshire County Council believes that education is best provided directly by schools and that having the Council directly responsible for providing education on a school site confuses this picture. Ultimately the school’s governing body is responsible for the progress of children on the school’s roll and they should be given the freedom and flexibility to make the best use of resources. Given that this provision could have an impact on the outcome of the school’s Ofsted inspection it is unreasonable that the Headteacher should not have managerial control of the staff working on their site.

### What would be the role of the Council under these proposals?

The Council will retain a clear focus on supporting and challenging schools to ensure they meet the needs of all learners, particularly the most vulnerable. This involves setting clear expectations as to what every school should provide for learners and ensuring that these expectations are being met.

The Council will also ensure that specialist staff have access to a high quality programme of training to ensure their professional development is maintained.

1. Cease separate Key Stage 1 & 2 provision - Move to an all-through-primary model

Currently three out of the six settings provide a service for either key stage 1 or 2. This means that learners who continue to need specialist support are forced to move settings between key stages. For those children in infants or junior schools this is unavoidable but the Council believes that such transitions should be minimised.

### Why do we want to make this change to this provision?

There are opportunities to reduce this impact by developing all-through primary SEN provision wherever possible. Plans are emerging to convert some of the County’s infants or junior schools to primary schools, including at least one of those with DSLP settings and, subject to approval, this may provide opportunities to extend the specialist provision to an all-through primary model. Everyone consulted so far has agreed that this would reduce unnecessary disruption and improve the provision for vulnerable learners.

## How to Submit Your Feedback

You may also send comments either by completing the questionnaire on the Ask Warwickshire website here:

<https://askwarks.wordpress.com/>

or by completing a paper based questionnaire available on request from on of the DSLP bases or from the following address (please enclose stamped addressed envelope):

Vulnerable Learners Strategy Consultation (Ref: SEND02),

Education and Learning,

Saltisford Office Park,

Ansell Way,

Warwick CV34 4UL.

Wherever possible we would urge you to respond online as this makes the process of gathering feedback quicker and easier.

Following the end of this consultation period the feedback that has been gathered will be presented to Council for a decision as to whether to proceed as well as to the respective Governing Bodies who will meet decide whether they support the proposal for them to take over control of the settings in the light of the results of the consultation. Should we go forward with the proposals, the final decision will be made by the Local Authority.

# Timetable

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Event | Date |
| Formal consultation on proposed changes (*Public meetings, Ask Warwickshire, etc.)* | 19th January – 21st March 2016 |
| Decision (determination) on proposal | April 14th Cabinet Meeting |
| Announcement of Council Decision | By end of April |
| If recommendations are approved period for formal representations | End of May 2016 |
| If no formal representations – proceed to implementation | September 2016 |

The above timeline is dependent on the feedback to this consultation process. Having received the gathered feedback the Council may decide to explore alternative options.

## Appendix 1 – Planned Development of SEN Specialist Provision

**Phase 1 Programme: New SEND Provision for School-Aged Children**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category of SEN | Phase | Location | Number of places | Planned opening date |
| Complex Mental Health Needs | Secondary | North Warwickshire | 6 | January 2016 |
| Communication & Interaction /  Cognition & Learning /  Sensory and/or Physical Needs | Primary & Secondary | Rugby | 7 (Primary)  14 (Secondary) | January 2016 |
| Communication & Interaction | Primary & Secondary | Central Warwickshire | 8 Secondary  8 Primary | Summer Term 2016 (Secondary)  Autumn Term 2016 (Primary) |
| Communication & Interaction | Primary & Secondary | North Warwickshire | 8 Primary  8 Secondary | Summer Term 2016 |
| Social Emotional Mental Health | Primary | Rugby | 10 Primary | Autumn Term 2016 |

**Phase 2 Programme: New SEND Provision for School-Aged Children**

Still in the planning stages – no details available as yet – but aims to establish a further 5 SEN provisions attached to mainstream.To be delivered from September 2016 onwards with likely opening dates of September 2017.

## Appendix 2 – Recommendations arising from the 2015 Review of Warwickshire’s Speech Language and Communication Needs Services

In summary the broader recommendations (other than those concerning the DSLP settings) were as follows:

* Restructuring the Council’s Integrated Disability Service Autism Team and Specific Language Disorders Team to create an integrated ‘Communication & Interaction’ team bringing together these different specialisms
* Maintain the current Dedicated Schools Grant contribution of £171k p.a. towards Speech and Language Therapy
* Introduction of a Speech & Language Therapy transition service for Year 7 pupils to support learners through this difficult transition year (currently most learners are discharged at year 6)
* Introduction of three new pathways clarifying speech and language support at the following school stages:
  + Reception/Key Stage 1 Pathway
  + Key Stage 2 Pathway
  + Key Stage 3 Pathway

1. See supplementary paper ‘Draft Guidance on Admission to SEND specialist state funded provision in Warwickshire’ for more details. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See supplementary paper ‘Correction and additional information’ for more details. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)