

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2013**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

SUBJECT: **NORTH EAST WALES SENSORY SUPPORT SERVICE**

1.00 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To report on the progress to bring into being the sub-regional sensory service and for the Cabinet to ratify the decision to move to a partnership delivery model.

2.00 **BACKGROUND**

2.01 In response to the directive from the Welsh Government to increase collaboration and consortium working, the possibility of a regional Sensory Service was identified as a priority by Inclusion Officers across North Wales. Sensory impairment services are small and highly specialised in many authorities. Working together would enable greater resilience and efficiency through enhanced scale. It would also enable service users to benefit through a greater range of specialist staff being available to support children and young people, and their families and carers. Following a series of exploratory meetings with representation from the six LAs, officers from Wrexham, Denbighshire and Flintshire proceeded to scope a service to cover North East Wales.

2.02 The three authorities developed a full business case (available in the Members' Library). The full business case was also presented for consideration by the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee (September 2012). Flintshire County Council has been identified as host authority for the new service.

2.03 Officers across the three LAs have worked with existing service staff and other LA officers to generate the Partnership Agreement (see Appendix 2) and other associated documentation along with a full service model for delivery.

3.00 **CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 Members are asked to consider the benefits achieved through the realisation of the sub-regional service. It is anticipated that the revised model of delivery will enhance the support available to

children and young people, their families and schools across the region. Service staff will also be supported in their roles through an extended peer group and the ability to develop and utilise their areas of specialism.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That Members recognise the positive actions taken to enhance the service available to children and young people with a sensory loss across the counties of Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire.
- 4.02 That the decision to move to a sub-regional service is ratified by the Cabinet.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The service model has been developed to fit within the combined current budget allocated to sensory provision by the three LAs. It is anticipated there will be efficiencies generated through the regional collaboration, particularly in relation to equipment and resources. As the service becomes established over time, it may possible to identify more efficient ways of working with pupils, parents and schools resulting in reduced staffing levels and savings as a result of this.
- 5.02 The Partnership Agreement outlines the financial arrangements between the host LA (Flintshire) and Wrexham and Denbighshire LAs identifying the detail around provision and process. The Agreement clearly indicates the shared financial responsibilities of all partners in relation to staff and assets should the Partnership be dissolved.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 None as a result of this development.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 None as a result of this development.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and it is considered that the sub-regional development will provide positive benefits for children and young people with a sensory loss.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 The identified service structure was possible to achieve with limited impact on existing service staff. Ant adjustments identified to realise the structure have been made by the originating LA and the service is now fully staffed in line with the proposed model.

9.02 The service will be hosted by Flintshire County Council and existing Wrexham and Denbighshire staff will transfer to Flintshire County Council under TUPE regulations.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Consultation had been identified to take place with all service staff and their union representatives. Officers have also liaised with Betsi Cadwallader University Health Board professionals and the voluntary sector regarding the proposed changes in service delivery.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Group and individual consultation meetings have taken place with staff and union representative.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1: Full Business Case for a Three County Sensory Service (in the Members' Library/website).
Appendix 2: Partnership Agreement (in the Members' Library/website).

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.

Contact Officer: Jeanette Rock
Telephone: 01352 704017
Email: jeanette.rock@flintshire.gov.uk