

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013

**Lead Member / Officer:** Councillor Eryl Williams, Lead Member for Education

**Report Author:** Head of Education

**Title:** North East Wales Sensory Support Service

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**1. What is the report about?**

1.1 The formation of a North East Wales Sensory Support Service in partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council and Flintshire County Council.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

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

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

3.1 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.

3.2 That the decision to move to a sub-regional service is approved by the Cabinet.

**4. Report details.**

4.1 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 North Wales Local Authorities, officers from Wrexham, Denbighshire and Flintshire proceeded to scope a service to cover North East Wales.

4.2 The three authorities developed a full business case (see Appendix 1). Flintshire County Council has been identified as host authority for the new service.

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

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

- 5.1 Education has been identified as a corporate priority. The decision contributes to this priority because it will ensure the sustainability of a small, but significant service; and safeguard the entitlement to access appropriate support, of children and young people with this type of additional learning need learning.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1 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 be 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.
- 6.2 The Partnership Agreement outlines the financial arrangements between the host authority (Flintshire) and Wrexham and Denbighshire, 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.

## **7. What consultations have been carried out and has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been undertaken?**

- 7.1 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.
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- 7.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 3. It is considered that the sub-regional development will provide positive benefits for children and young people with a sensory loss.

## **8. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

- 8.1 The service model will result in a more efficient and effective service that can be delivered within the existing budget. It may be possible to identify budget savings in future years. The financial management and governance arrangements proposed in the draft agreement must be assessed by Finance before final approval.

**9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

The overarching risk is the inability to deliver the range of service required by children and young people, and future sustainability of service within the current model.

**10 Power to make the Decision**

S13 Education Act 1996  
S101 Local Government Act 1972