



## Report to Policy Committee

**Author/Lead Officer of Report:** Emma Bryant,  
Commissioning Officer, Integrated Commissioning

**Tel:** 0114 474 3129

**Report of:** *Joe Horobin, Director of Integrated Commissioning*  
**Report to:** *Education, Children & Families Policy Committee*  
**Date of Decision:** *27 September 2023*  
**Subject:** *Exclusion Prevention Alternative Provision*

|                                                                                                                                                                    |     |                                     |    |                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?                                                                                                           | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 2310                                                                                                          |     |                                     |    |                          |
| Has appropriate consultation taken place?                                                                                                                          | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?                                                                                                             | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?                                                                                                        | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-                            |     |                                     |    |                          |
| <i>“Appendix 2 is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i> |     |                                     |    |                          |

### **Purpose of Report:**

This report sets out the Exclusion Prevention Alternative Provision (AP) service and describes how the services have been delivered to date.

This report then sets out the proposal to commission a new Exclusion Prevention Alternative Provision service which will commence from April 2024, with additional capacity and improvements to the delivery model, to better meet the needs of children and young people and further prevent exclusion.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Education, Children & Families Policy Committee approves the commissioning of Exclusion Prevention Alternative Provision from an external provider for a period of three years and for an estimated value of £1.5m, as set out in this report, with the ability to increase capacity by up to £900,000 if additional funding can be identified.

## Background Papers:

Alternative Provision Review, Report to Education, Children & Families Policy Committee, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023

| Lead Officer to complete:- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                  |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                          | I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.                                                                                                  | Finance: Carol Harris and Anna Beeby                             |
|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Legal: Richard Marik                                             |
|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton                             |
|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Climate: Matthew Peers                                           |
|                            | <i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                  |
| 2                          | <b>SLB member who approved submission:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Meredith Dixon-Teasdale                                          |
| 3                          | <b>Committee Chair consulted:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Dawn Dale                                                        |
| 4                          | I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1. |                                                                  |
|                            | <b>Lead Officer Name:</b><br>Emma Bryant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Job Title:</b><br>Commissioning Officer, Inclusion & Learning |
|                            | <b>Date:</b> 7.9.23                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                  |

## 1. PROPOSAL

### Summary

- 1.1
- The Exclusion Prevention service already exists and is currently delivered by Sheffield Inclusion Centre.
  - The current service ends at the end of March 2024.
  - This paper seeks approval to commission a new service from April 2024.
  - The current service has had positive impact on preventing exclusion (approx. 90% of children in receipt of service); through the new commission we are aiming to do more of what works and address gaps, such as lack of full-time alternative provision to prevent exclusion.

- This proposal is aligned with the citywide Alternative Provision (AP) model discussed at committee in January 2023, and the wider Inclusion Strategy.
- The new provider will be expected to ensure that they work with child, family, and school to create successful intervention that enables the child to be successful in their home school.
- There is a tight timeframe to ensure the new commission is in place for April 2024, the tender process is planned for October 2023.

## Background

- 1.2 The vision of Sheffield’s co-produced Inclusion Strategy, 2020-2025, is:
- 1.3 **“Sheffield will be an inclusive city where we work together to ensure that all children and young people get the right support at the right time so that they can live a happy and fulfilled life”.**
- 1.4 The strategy includes a commitment to develop a wide range of education, health and care services that delivers the right support at the right time. This includes development of sufficient high quality AP places.
- 1.5 The Sheffield one year plan articulates an intent to reduce exclusion in all forms. Permanent exclusions in Sheffield are rising and have now surpassed pre-pandemic figures (further detail is provided in Appendix 1). Within this context, high quality AP is needed to provide short term intensive support to help pupils re-engage with education and have a greater level of belonging within their school and community.
- 1.6 Within the government’s recently published SEND/AP Improvement Plan and SEND local area framework, there is an expectation of a citywide approach to AP that is co-ordinated and is focused on three areas:
- Upstream interventions
  - Short term interventions
  - Long term transitional placements
- 1.7 Our strategic intent is to ensure that more children are accessing an appropriate education, reducing rates of exclusion and leading to better life outcomes. We recognise that the breadth of needs across family support, emotional health and well-being, Special Educational Needs and barriers to attendance all need to be addressed to ensure impact.
- 1.8 In January 2023, Education, Children and Families Policy Committee endorsed the development of a citywide AP model to deliver consistent and quality provision that supports inclusion within the city. This report is attached as a background paper.
- 1.9 The commissioning activity proposed below is in line with the proposed future model of delivery reviewed by Committee in January 2023, which

recommends, among multiple strands of AP, targeted short term provision to assess and address the risk of exclusion.

- 1.10 This position is the backdrop for this proposal to commission Exclusion Prevention AP with increased scope to reduce exclusions and enable children and young people to feel that they belong in their school and community.

#### The current service

- 1.11 Within the current AP offer for the city, for approximately five years, Sheffield Inclusion Centre has delivered short term, part time AP for children who are on roll at a school but are at risk of exclusion.
- 1.12 Service provision will cease in March 2024, and we are proposing that a new Exclusion Prevention AP service is commissioned that will replace and expand on the existing offer, with delivery to commence in April 2024.
- 1.13 Note that Sheffield Inclusion Centre currently deliver two separate services for the Local Authority:
1. Exclusion Prevention AP for children at risk of exclusion (referred to above).
  2. Sheffield Inclusion Centre provide education for children who have been permanently excluded. This provision will continue and is unaffected by Sheffield Inclusion Centre ceasing to deliver Exclusion Prevention AP.
- See Appendix 2 for further information.
- 1.14 Children accessing the service are at significant risk of exclusion. They are referred by schools to a local authority led multi-agency panel, and if appropriate, panel will then refer the child to the service. The provision is accessed by the child on a part time basis for a short-term period, usually two to three terms.
- 1.15 There are currently four AP hubs across the city, delivering 20 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) placements for primary and secondary pupils. One of the four hubs is based in locality B as there is a high number of exclusions in the area (further detail provided in section 4.1). Locality B is made up of Burngreave, Firth Park and Shiregreen & Brightside (a map of localities is provided in Appendix 3).
- 1.16 A comprehensive review of the service was carried out in 2022. The service has had consistent positive impact, with permanent exclusion avoided for around 90% of children.

#### Overview of proposal

- 1.17 The existing Exclusion Prevention AP service will cease in March 2024, and it is proposed that the Council commission an external provider to deliver the service, with some added capacity and improvements to the

current delivery model, for a period of 3 years and an estimated value of £1.5m.

- 1.18 The proposed commission will provide a minimum of 24 FTE placements for children at risk of exclusion.
- 1.19 The intended impact of the proposed commission is:
- Exclusion will be prevented for at least 85% children supported.
  - A reduction in suspensions and improved attendance for children supported.
  - Schools will have increased knowledge, skills, and capacity to meet the needs of children at risk of exclusion.
  - Children will tell us they feel better able to cope at school, engage with learning and have a greater sense of belonging.
  - Parents and schools will see positive change in their children.
  - Reduced number of full-time places required at Sheffield Inclusion Centre (currently 300). It is anticipated that a reduction in places required in the Inclusion Centre will release further resource for exclusion prevention activity.

#### Proposed delivery for the service

- 1.20 The proposed delivery model aligns with statutory guidance regarding 'Good Alternative Provision':

*Good alternative provision is that which appropriately meets the needs of pupils which required its use and enables them to achieve good educational attainment on par with their mainstream peers. All pupils must receive a good education, regardless of their circumstances or the settings in which they find themselves. Provision will differ from pupil to pupil, but there are some common elements that alternative provision should aim to achieve, including:*

- *good academic attainment on par with mainstream schools – particularly in English, maths and science (including IT) – with appropriate accreditation and qualifications;*
- *that the specific personal, social and academic needs of pupils are properly identified and met in order to help them to overcome any barriers to attainment;*
- *improved pupil motivation and self-confidence, attendance and engagement with education; and*
- *clearly defined objectives, including the next steps following the placement such as reintegration into mainstream education, further education, training or employment.*

- 1.21 The following elements will be delivered within the proposed service:
1. Potential for both full time and part time placements
  2. Placements for Primary and Secondary pupils
  3. A locality B based hub to address need within this geographical area
  4. Small groups and high staffing ratio

5. Teacher led delivery with links to the curriculum
6. Strong leadership with a full time manager leading the service

1.22 Key approaches for delivery:

- Individual child plans underpinned by whole family support through multi-disciplinary teams.
- Continuous links and communication between the referring school and the AP, with the aim of reintegration to full time education in the referring school from the outset.
- Detailed and robust handover with clearly documented, detailed guidance provided to the referring school to support them to continue strategies and approaches that have been successful.
- Structured, high-quality provision including the following elements:
  - Trauma informed and relational approaches and trained staff.
  - Mentoring and CBT approaches may also be part of the work.
  - Teaching and learning with clear links to the curriculum
  - Individualised child plans that reflect the child's needs, strengths and aspirations and identify the changes that are needed to support reintegration.
  - Parental involvement within the plan and support to parents where identified as needed, via Early Help or other services.
  - Effective systems for assessing and tracking pupils' social, emotional and behavioural progress.
  - Robust safeguarding system and process informing all aspects of delivery.

1.23 Short term full-time placements are appropriate where there is an immediate risk of exclusion or where the pupil faces specific barriers to engagement that can be addressed intensively over a short period, for example substance use.

1.24 School leaders tell us that there is a need for good short-term full time AP that is 'upstream' of the AP provided by SIC once a child has been excluded.

1.25 There will be a high level of teacher involvement and oversight, in line with the government SEND and AP Improvement Plan (2023), which highlights the importance of an appropriately skilled workforce.

1.26 This aligns with the proposed model for Sheffield developed as part of the ongoing review of AP, which prioritises support to access effective academic learning so that children can progress to next level learning and the world of work.

1.27 A high level of staffing is essential to keep this cohort of children safe, create an environment in which they can thrive, and deliver one to one interventions to help them develop skills and strategies that can transfer

to the school setting.

- 1.28 The proposed service allows for strong leadership, with the cost of a full-time school leadership post incorporated.
- 1.29 We know that permanent exclusion is avoided for most pupils accessing our existing Exclusion Prevention AP, so the cost should be considered in relation to the cost of permanent exclusion, which is likely to bring with it a high cost over a longer term. The estimated cost to the state per pupil who is permanently excluded is £370,000 (Social Finance 2020).
- 1.30 An outreach element delivered under the current service, has not been incorporated in the proposed recommission. This is because there are now alternative mentoring and advisory offers in the city. Pupils accessing the commissioned service will receive outreach support with staff visiting them at school both during and after their time in the AP.

#### Additional services

- 1.31 Under the Council's current funding envelope, the Council have sufficient funding to commission a minimum of 24 FTE placements for a period of 3 years and estimated value of £1.5m for the exclusion prevention AP service. However, should additional funding of between £700k and £900k become available to the Council, it is intended that the Council shall have the option to increase the services to provide a minimum of 36 FTE placements (bringing the total value of the services to between £2.1m and £2.7m).
- 1.32 It is therefore proposed that the value of the commission can be increased if funding is identified.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?**

- 2.1 The One year plan focuses on reducing exclusion in all forms. The recommissioning and expansion of Exclusion Prevention AP supports this aspiration and will provide greater choice of provision that is used in a targeted way to ensure that vulnerable children can successfully make progress.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 As part of the ongoing review of AP, engagement with schools, providers, children, and parents has taken place, including workshops attended by elected members.
- 3.2 Our children and families have told us that:
- AP provides a safe place for learning
  - Students feel valued at AP

- Students feel that AP gave them a fresh opportunity to learn
- AP helps them to develop confidence and self-worth
- Many students want to remain in AP and not return to school

3.3 Our schools have told us that:

- They want AP to be a part of the curriculum offer
- Cost is not the primary issue as the key requirement is quality provision that can meet need
- They have concerns about quality of some provision
- They want to offer interventions to learning which support students to avoid exclusion
- They want better collaboration to support re-integration
- They want provision which focuses on behaviour and emotional regulation

3.4 Feedback from children, families and schools on the existing Exclusion Prevention AP tells us that:

- Children enjoy attending the provision and the activities
- Children feel it helps them in life and at school
- Parents and schools see positive changes in children
- Schools value good communication from the AP
- Schools say the AP prevents exclusions

3.5 A survey was recently circulated to school leaders. They told us that:

- They sometimes struggle to find suitable AP
- They would like to see more short term, full time, early intervention AP
- They would use Exclusion Prevention AP commissioned by the Local Authority
- Family engagement is important
- Alignment with the school curriculum is important
- Extended support on reintegration is needed

## 4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

### 4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 Protected characteristics that will be impacted by the proposed commission are: age, disability, race, and sex. In addition, the proposed commission is intended to mitigate against inequalities relating to poverty and financial inclusion.

4.1.2 It is intended that all children supported and their families will benefit in the following ways:

- In most cases, permanent exclusion will be avoided.
- Children will develop strategies and resilience that will enable them to cope better with the school setting, engage with education and thrive at school.



- There will be a reduction in suspensions and improved attendance for children supported.
  - Their school will have increased knowledge, skills, and capacity to meet their needs
  - Children will tell us they feel better able to cope at school, engage with learning and have a greater sense of belonging.
  - Parents will see positive change in their children.
- 4.1.3 **Race:** BAME children are significantly over-represented in the cohort of children identified as at risk of exclusion and referred to the existing service for support. A breakdown of the ethnicity of children accessing the service over time shows the following:
- White British - 62.4%
  - White gypsy/Roma - 11.4%
  - White and black Caribbean - 7.9%
  - White and any other Asian - 3.0%
  - All other ethnicities were 2.5% or less.
- 4.1.4 This compares to National Census data 2021 showing that within Sheffield Local Authority:
- 74.5% of the population were White British
  - 0.5% of the population were of Roma or White gypsy/Traveller ethnicity combined
  - 0.4% of the population were White or Black Caribbean
- 4.1.5 This issue is addressed in the Sheffield Race Equality Commission report 2022, which identifies that BAME pupils made up 52% of pupils on roll at the Pupil Referral Unit (i.e. pupils who had been permanently excluded) and within that 52%, children of Roma ethnicity made up 20%.
- 4.1.6 These outcomes are largely unchanged: in 2022-23 academic year, 47% of exclusions in Sheffield were of BME children, and within that, 14.5% were of children of Roma ethnicity.
- 4.1.7 The proposed commission is intended to prevent exclusion for all children referred, including BAME children. We know that the existing service is successful in preventing exclusion for 90% children accessing, including BAME children.
- 4.1.8 As part of the proposed commission, an AP hub will be based in locality B, which is made up of Burngreave, Firth Park and Shiregreen & Brightside (a map of localities is provided in Appendix 3). This is because there is a high number of exclusions in this part of the city.
- 4.1.9 Since 2020, locality B has had the highest number of pupils excluded, compared to the other six localities in the city. Between 2019 and 2022, 27.8% of exclusions were of children at schools in locality B.
- 4.1.10 Of children excluded in locality B, a high proportion are BAME, and within that, a high proportion are Roma. Of children excluded in locality

B between 2019 and 2022, 49.8.5 were BME and 16.6% were Roma. Equally, of BAME pupils excluded across the city during the same period, 53.5% were in locality B. Of Roma children excluded across the city, 80.9% were in locality B.

- 4.1.11 It is intended that several elements of the proposed commission will improve outcomes for children accessing the locality B based provision and the service as a whole:
1. Individual child plans underpinned by whole family support through multi-disciplinary teams.
  2. Teacher led delivery with links to the curriculum.
  3. Continuous links and communication between the referring school and the AP.
  4. Robust handover with detailed guidance provided to the referring school to support them to continue strategies and approaches that have been successful.
- 4.1.12 The provider for this hub and the service as a whole will be expected to work to engage families from all communities, including where there are barriers to engagement such as mis-trust of services. Within the procurement process, providers will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of strategies to engage hard to reach families, and successful experience in this area.
- 4.1.13 We have considered views and feedback from children and parents, including BAME children and families, in relation to the existing service. However, it has not been possible to engage directly with BAME children and families within the planned timeframe for commissioning a service without any gap in delivery. Commissioning will seek to carry out further, on-going engagement with BAME organisations representing ethnicities over-represented in the excluded cohort, and with BAME children at risk of or with experience of exclusion.
- 4.1.14 This approach will help us understand how effectively the commissioned service is meeting need for BAME children and families and how to improve it further.
- 4.1.15 **Disability:** Of children accessing the existing service, 90.2% are identified as having SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) at the point at which they start to access. For 63.4%, the primary need (the child's foremost need) falls into the category of Social, Emotional and Mental Health. Many of the children have experienced trauma, ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) or attachment issues.
- 4.1.16 The proposed commission will support children with these needs through a Nurture based, Trauma Informed approach. The intention is that with intensive support, children will develop strategies and resilience that will enable them to cope better with the school setting, engage with education and thrive at school.
- 4.1.17 **Age & Sex:** By supporting vulnerable children from primary phase

through to key stage 3 (age 14), the proposed commission supports the ambition for Sheffield to be an age-friendly inclusive city. Boys are disproportionately affected by exclusion. Since 2019, 75% of exclusions in Sheffield have been for boys. Of pupils accessing the existing service over time, 81% have been boys. The proposed commission is intended to prevent exclusions in Sheffield; given that the majority of excluded pupils are boys, this will have positive impact for boys. Girls at risk of exclusion who are referred will also benefit.

4.1.8 **Poverty and financial inclusion:** Receipt of Free School Meals is a key indicator of financial disadvantage. Pupils receiving Free Schools Meals make up around 30% of the total pupils in Sheffield. In annual year 2021-22, 70.2% children who were excluded received Free School Meals, and in annual year 2022-23 it was 68.6%. This demonstrates that financially disadvantaged children are over-represented within the cohort of excluded children. In addition, we know that excluded children are likely to experience poverty as adults. The proposed commission is intended to prevent exclusion, and in doing so, improve outcomes for already disadvantaged children and help prevent future poverty.

4.1.9 Impact for the cohorts listed above will be measured and analysed on an ongoing basis throughout the contract period. The Equalities Impact Assessment will be reviewed during the Autumn term of academic year 2025-26, once the service has been delivered for a complete school year (academic year 2024-25). A milestone relating to equalities to be reviewed at this point will be for 75% of children of Roma heritage accessing the service to avoid exclusion. This target will be increased over time as the provision becomes established. Further milestones will be added in response to ongoing analysis of outcomes for specific cohorts.

## 4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 Commercial considerations – with this requirement being considered outside the scope of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, a waiver of Standing Orders in the form of the procurement strategy will be agreed in consultation with Commercial Services to ensure that Exclusion Prevention AP is procured and awarded in a manner that will meet principals of equal treatment and transparency.

4.2.2 Financial considerations - The proposed cost of the new commission to SCC will be £500k per annum. This is within the current funding envelop.

4.2.3 It is hoped that savings/efficiencies can be made in other parts of the service to enable an increase to the commission up to an additional £700k-£900k. Options are currently being explored and the value of the commission will be based on the outcome of this activity. This may result in the commission cost increasing from £1.5m to between £2.1m and £2.7m over the course of the contract.

### 4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 The Council has a duty (so far as their powers enable them to do so) to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary education and secondary education and further education, are available to meet the needs of the population of their area under s13 Education Act 1996.
- 4.3.2 The Council also has a duty to arrange suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils, and for other pupils who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such provision under s19 Education Act 1996.
- 4.3.3 The proposed commission in this report shall contribute towards the discharge of the Council’s duty under s13 by reducing the number of children excluded from school. The proposed commission shall also go some way to alleviating any pressures faced by the Council in discharging its duty under s19.
- 4.3.4 The contracting arrangements in this report are facilitated by the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997.

### 4.4 Climate Implications

- 4.4.1 We will aim through the procurement process to work with providers who align with our ambition to be a Net Zero city by 2030. We will encourage providers to consider the climate impacts of delivering the service, such as use of office space, staff and client travel, energy and resource use, and opportunities to increase awareness of positive climate action, and to take appropriate steps to reduce their impacts in the delivery of the service.
- 4.4.2 The location of the AP will be considered as part of the procurement process. The current service is delivered across four sites so there is some scope for pupils to access the provision locally, with the locality B AP providing local provision for children in the local area. With the proposed increased reach there is scope for six or more sites, which may provide more opportunities for children to be placed locally. This has benefits for children and families as well as the environment.

### 4.5 Other Implications

- 4.5.1 *None*

## 5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 Not recommissioning Exclusion Prevention AP was considered.
- 5.2 This was rejected as high-quality preventative AP is needed to mitigate against the increase in exclusions. Exclusion Prevention AP has been

successful in the city in preventing exclusion for most children accessing. It is not affordable for AP on the AP Network to deliver provision of this kind without being subsidised, as a very high level of staffing is required.

- 5.3 Delivering the AP in house was considered.
- 5.4 This was rejected as specific expertise and extensive experience in re-engagement / Nurture AP is needed to deliver high quality interventions. This level of expertise does not exist within current Council services and there would be a significant additional cost to developing this.

## **6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 We recommend that an Exclusion Prevention Alternative Provision Service is commissioned from an external provider for a period of three years, in order to support vulnerable children to develop social and emotional skills and resilience to help them engage with learning and avoid exclusion.
- 6.2 This approach is in line with the proposed future model of delivery reviewed by Committee in January 2023, which recommends, among multiple strands of AP, targeted short term provision to assess and address the risks of exclusion.
- 6.3 The intended impact of the proposed commission is:
- Exclusion will be prevented for at least 85% children supported.
  - A reduction in suspensions and improved attendance for children supported.
  - Schools will have increased knowledge, skills, and capacity to meet the needs of children at risk of exclusion.
  - Children will tell us they feel better able to cope at school, engage with learning and have a greater sense of belonging.
  - Parents and schools will see positive change in their children.
  - Reduced number of full-time places required at Sheffield Inclusion Centre (currently 300).
- 6.4 If this proposal is approved, members will be kept up to date on progress via member briefings, and further updates as required.

This page is intentionally left blank