

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Consultation response on proposed approach to commissioning a new model of primary Additionally Resourced Mainstream School (ARMS) provision 2017-18

**REPORT OF:** Val Hall, Service Director - Early Help, Care, Wellbeing and Learning

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Cabinet about the response to the consultation exercise on the proposed approach to commissioning a new model of Additionally resourced mainstream school (ARMS) provision in the primary sector in Gateshead for 2017-18 onwards and to seek approval to further develop the new model in partnership with schools.

### **Background**

2. ARMS provision aims to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who may not meet the criteria to be taught in a special school or would benefit from being taught in a mainstream school and receive specialist support that meets their individual needs.
3. There is a need to review the current ARMS provision in Gateshead due to current pressures on special school places within the primary sector at both Gibside School and The Cedars Academy with very limited availability of places for the 2017-18 academic year. In addition, requests have been made by the governing bodies of Rowlands Gill and Eslington Primary Schools to discontinue their ARMS provision at the end of the 2016-17 academic year. At January 2017, 27 out of 67 potential primary ARMS places were vacant, due mainly to the previously agreed phasing out of the Bill Quay ARMS provision and the requests by Rowlands Gill and Eslington Schools to discontinue ARMS provision and a subsequent reduction in new admissions. This represents 40% of potential ARMS provision capacity not currently being delivered to address the individual needs of primary school aged children with SEND. This is an inefficient use of resources, adds pressure to High Needs Block funding and is resulting in the need for additional capacity in special schools.
4. It is therefore vital that a future model of ARMS in Gateshead is implemented during 2017-18, which will successfully meet the needs of individual children and deliver positive outcomes for them, and be delivered to the highest quality.

### **Proposal**

5. The Council consulted between 31 March and 31 May 2017 on the proposal of a pilot process being implemented during the 2017-18 academic year leading to the implementation of a new primary ARMS model from September 2018. Further details about the proposals and the consultation responses can be found in appendix 1.

## **Recommendations**

6. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) Notes the responses to the consultation exercise; and
- (ii) Endorses the implementation of the proposed pilot process during 2017-18.

For the following reasons:

The pilot process will inform a new ARMS model being developed in partnership with schools and implemented from September 2018 which will be delivered to the highest quality, enable the needs of children with SEND to be met and deliver positive outcomes for them and will reduce the strain on places required in special schools.

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### Policy Context

1. The Council has statutory duties to promote high educational standards; ensure fair access; promote diversity and ensure education is appropriate to meet the different age, aptitudes and abilities of pupils in its area and make efficient use of its resources. The proposals in this report are consistent with statutory duties and with the vision for children and young people as set out in Vision 2030, Children Gateshead; the plan for children, young people and families and Gateshead's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy.

### Proposed Pilot Process

2. The proposed pilot process leading to new model from September 2018 was set out in the consultation as follows:

**Firstly**, we propose that the current ARMS and Gateshead special schools work together to form collaborative partnerships to share expertise and skills. It is proposed that pupils in ARMS provision could be registered with special schools with the special schools providing expert staffing and assistance on an outreach basis. We propose that this type of provision is known as Special/Mainstream Host Schools (SMHS).

**Secondly**, we propose that all Gateshead mainstream primary schools would be invited to express an interest in working in partnership with special schools to host provision initially for children with autism/social communication difficulties. This is in recognition of increasing numbers of children being identified with these needs in the primary sector.

**Thirdly** the governing bodies of Rowlands Gill and Eslington Schools would be invited to trial the new proposed model which would involve Rowlands Gill working with staff from Gibside School to offer provision for children with learning difficulties and Eslington working with a mainstream school for Key Stage 2 children with social emotional and mental health difficulties.

**Fourthly**, all existing ARMS schools will be offered the opportunity to comment on a proposed new model which would be based on an outreach basis from Gateshead special schools. This could also enable greater movement of children between mainstream and special schools if it is considered that needs are changing or to provide additional support if needed for a temporary period. As part of this process, we would formally require all existing ARMS host schools to indicate their continued willingness to host a provision or to formally withdraw.

### Consultation

3. Using the Council's online consultation portal, the Council consulted between 31 March and 31 May 2017 on the proposal of a pilot process being implemented during the 2017-18 academic year leading to the implementation of a new primary ARMS model from September 2018. Parents in Power, Gateshead's Parent-Carer Forum,

also carried out independent consultation on the proposals with parents and carers of children with SEND.

4. 39 people responded to the online consultation. 20% of respondents were employees in a school without ARMS provision, 10% were parents of children in ARMS provision, 5% were employees in existing ARMS school and the majority were 'Other' – ranging from ex-teachers or education professionals, parents/carers/grandparents/relatives of children in special schools/mainstream schools, school governors, SEN support staff and social workers.
  - Of the 39 respondents, 49% strongly agreed that the current ARMS Gateshead special schools should form collaborative partnerships to share expertise and skills. 38% tended to agree with this proposal. 8% strongly disagreed and 5% tended to disagree.
  - Of the 39 respondents, 41% strongly agreed that pupils in ARMS provision should be registered with special schools, with special schools providing expert staffing and assistance on an outreach basis. This type of provision would be known as Special/Mainstream Host Schools (SMHS). 33% tended to agree with this proposal. 23% tended to disagree or strongly disagree with this proposal. The reasons given for not agreeing with this proposal were around concerns about 'buy-in' to the new model from special schools and whether they would have sufficient resources to fund/staff high quality SMHS provision. 3% didn't know.
  - Of the 39 respondents, 36% strongly agreed with the proposal to move away from a one size fits all model of 8 places in Special/Mainstream Host Schools (SMHS) to one based on predicted levels of need, which is based on our evidence base. 46% tended to agree while 13% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed. 5% didn't know.
  - Of the 39 respondents, 44% strongly agreed with the proposal whereby where there is a short term drop in demand, schools would be supported to maintain the provision on the understanding that unutilised resources will be redeployed to ensure best value for money is maintained. 36% tended to agree while 15% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed. 5% didn't know.
5. Additional comments received via the online consultation and the report of the consultation carried out with a group of parents by Parents in Power can be found in Appendix 2 and 3.
6. The Cabinet Members for Children and Young People have been consulted.

### **Alternative Options**

7. Cabinet could decide to not approve the further implementation of the proposed pilot process during 2017-18. However, this would result in a delay to a new ARMS model being developed which could result in a further increase in numbers of places required in special schools, some of which are already oversubscribed. It would also mean that a number of ARMS places would remain unutilised which is an inefficient use of Council resources and a further strain on the High Needs Block.

## Implications of Recommended Option

### 8. Resources:

a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that there are no financial implications arising from this report.

b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no specific HR implications at this point in time.

c) **Property Implications** - None

### 9. Risk Management Implication - None

### 10. Equality and Diversity Implications - No specific Equality and Diversity implications at this point in time.

### 11. Crime and Disorder Implications – None

### 12. Health Implications - None

### 13. Sustainability Implications - None

### 14. Human Rights Implications - None

### 15. Area and Ward Implications - None

## Appendix 2

### Additional comments received via the online consultation portal about the Council's commissioning intentions for Additionally Resourced Mainstream School (ARMS) provision? (17 respondents)

Response
All of this should have happened from the start.
ARMS placements really do work for some children, particularly those with language difficulties but also some with SEMH who need more of a nurture group input. Frequently, when in the ARM at Bede, we discuss how, in actuality, it is the small group input, multisensory teaching and nurturing environment that these children are responding to. The mainstream classroom was just too much for them. I would say a model that funds nurture groups for KS1 AND KS2 in key communities around the Borough (not linked to Eslington at all) would be a more appropriate model to meet the needs of these pupils. South Tyneside also provides excellent time limited intervention for children with SEMH in primary schools which have a good success record.
Commissioning should concentrate on making sure front line services are maintained in relation to trying if staff and provision of equipment. And not around commissioning of staff to promote ARMS and management schools receiving or who have received additional funding as ARMS should maintain and improve provision and this should be monitored and maintained by commissioners, if they fail to provide appropriate support then funding should be withheld.
Currently not enough provision to meet the needs of children whose needs cannot be met in mainstream.
Do special school provision have the staff expertise and knowledge to be able to manage the specialist staff in mainstream settings to support pupils? There are centrally based Teams of specialist teachers with additional qualifications who may be more appropriate to advise in the mainstream settings?
I feel the needs of pupils in the ARMS must also include as much integration with mainstream schools wherever possible whilst their special needs are paramount.
I have not had the opportunity to read the full document. It all sounds like an improved system, there are many children who do not fully fit the criteria for a plan or special school who fall through the cracks, my son did not attend school from age 13 and was left to languish at home, so much for inclusion [this was Northumberland], I fought his case until eventually he was provided with a place at NETA in the Team Valley when he was 16. I would not want this to happen to any other child. My intelligent son who has ADHD now lacks some very basic knowledge. Children who have attachment issues may present with similar difficulties, one size does not fit all unfortunately.
I think it is really important to extend the links between all schools to enable staff to best meet the needs of our more complex pupils. I think it is important to maintain availability in the system to avoid children being educated in mainstream provision when that is the wrong provision for them.
I think what's needed is more specialist school places. It all sounds good in theory but have outlined my concerns about decommissioning if host school doesn't feel it's working , when vulnerable children are caught in the middle.. If all children requiring ARMS require an EHCP will more EHCP's be required? What's the impact of this? I'm sure there will be children not in ARMS now who would be if the new model was in place (especially as no ARMS now for ASD and so many more children diagnosed with ASD who will need some additional support). Also how can the LA cope with this if the SEN team has been reduced? Is this about the best model for children with additional needs or about the best model in terms of financial efficiency? Investing in nurturing and educating those who will be in our places in a generations time is the most important investment of all. There are some children with SEN who can do great things in their life with the

right investment in their education now.

My daughter is in year 2. She is settled into the school, well supported, making progress and feels safe. That is all we want for our children. As a teacher myself I say that as a parent and a professional. Changing the provision at such an important time in her development will have an impact on her. These children are those who particularly need the continuity and care that this school provides. Being registered at another school will only have one benefit - to improve SATs results. Is that what we have become? Where it is no longer about what is best for the children - just what data looks best?! My daughter deserves better. If it was your child's provision would you be happy?

No but I will seek more information.

Reduce class sizes as it takes one child to distract the teacher and the other five needing help to sit and be disruptive. Whoever makes these proposals must spend at least three months back in a classroom and be confident the proposal will work.

Sounds much better than provision currently in place.

These kids already have a very difficult time spreading the expertise more thinly will not help teachers or the children themselves.

This will be quite a challenging situation for the host school staff, particularly when ARMS children are integrated into mainstream classrooms. Very few mainstream class teachers have the expertise to support the children with complex learning needs, therefore free training and support is essential within this plan.

Whilst agreeing that the children should be registered with the special school, it is vital for the language ARMS that the existing Dual registration with their home school is continued as a high percentage of these children return to their home school. Parents would be unwilling to use the facility if they did not have the assurance that the place was held for their child. Obviously agreeing a suitable level of funding for running and staffing costs would need to be agreed in the service level agreement as well as establishing a clear set of entry and exit requirements understood by all. This is vital to ensure best value from the resources provided as children with language disorders or other barriers will not make the expected progress to allow them to return to their home school. Relationships and working models with the Gateshead CCG are strong and we highly value the expertise of the speech and language therapists. This has been stable for many years. Ensuring funding models are clarified is important. However we feel that existing delivery models for these services work well with all stakeholders.

Yes...these Arms units cost a huge amount of money 5 years ago keeping the existing bases open or set up new ones around the borough. So much money wasted each time they change. Also we need to make the process of getting children into these Places easier for maintained Schools....could children not go for this specialist provision for further assessments to help maintained School whose budgets are being slashed!



# Parents In Power

## Gateshead Parent Carer Forum

### Response to Gateshead Council Consultation May 2017

#### Additionally Resourced Mainstream School (ARMS) Provision

Parents In Power fully understand the reasoning behind the consultation to remodel and pilot the current ARMS resources. In a time of Austerity and major cutbacks there has to be better efficiencies and resources to ensure the child's needs are being met as set out in their EHCP. However we have had 3 group consultations with parents after sending out letters to the ARM schools and would like to respond to you with their concerns and views.

*"Firstly, we propose that the current ARMS and Gateshead special schools work together to form collaborative partnerships to share expertise and skills."*

#### **Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?**

The parents/carers strongly agreed with this statement.

#### **Q2. If you disagree with this proposal, please explain why you feel that way and, if possible, suggest an alternative approach.**

Although the parents strongly agreed with this they wanted to add a few comments:

- But it is a two way street with skills and expertise in both
- Skill sets are both ways. Arms staff are skilled in all areas of supporting children in mainstream education, accessing curriculum and meeting needs i.e. Braille and medical needs
- Working together is just good practice

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*Page 3 of the ARMS commissioning intentions report continues:*

*"It is proposed that pupils in ARMS provision could be registered with special schools with the special schools providing expert staffing and assistance on an outreach basis. We propose that this type of provision is known as Special/Mainstream Host Schools (SMHS)."*

#### **Q.3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?**

Parents either strongly disagreed with this or tend to agree.

#### **Q4. If you disagree with this proposal, please explain why you feel that way and, if possible, suggest an alternative approach.**

- This question only identifies the skills of special school staff as "expert" there are numerous ARMS staff providing expert support which is skilled in a variety of areas of need.



- Hearing Impaired: (High Spen) who would they liaise with in this which Special School?
- Who does this benefit? Is this discrimination not identifying ability and need but looking at the disability.
- If a child has a complex combination of needs could he/she be linked to more than one school and if so how would this work.
- Children with Special Needs need inclusion with mainstream kids. Mainstream kids need the understanding of children with special needs. Beneficial for all.
- Being identified as SMHS show no equality or recognition of Arms children to be equal/part of their school.
- Needs to be pointed out that ARMS provision meets the needs of a wide variety of children some with no cognitive issues.

*We are proposing to move away from a one size fits all model of 8 places in Special/Mainstream Host Schools (SMHS) to one based on predicted levels of need, which is based on our evidence base*

**Q5. To what extent to you agree or disagree with this?**

Parents tend to strongly disagree with this although some also did tend to agree.  
 “Predicted level of need? This concerns me”

**Q6. If you disagree with this proposal, please explain why you feel that way and, if possible, suggest an alternative approach.**

- Are needs blocked together or individual needs looked at. Will you have 3 at one special school and the others at another?
- What are the predicted level of needs and how will you predict this
- Already have places where there are already challenges to raise numbers.

*Where there is a short term drop in demand schools will be supported to maintain the provision on the understanding that unutilised resources will be re-deployed to ensure best value is maintained.*

- Only comment on this: Feels like going back to old support services. Staff meeting needs, need to be consistent and not changed then returned, leaving a gap from where they’ve left.
- If demand is linked to a child needs not a number (Arms Placement) then that can be catered for.

Other points families wanted to make:

- No information/direction about ARMS so parents can choose this instead of mainstream or specialist provision
- Parents don't know about Local Offer or SENDIASS
- Extra funding from HNB. i.e. ARMS Budget if Swalwell and Gibside were working together how would Gibside manage the ARMS Budget. Concerns that not looking at need but how to manage budget.
- How will it be decided what uniform the children will wear. The uniform of the ARMS or the School they are matched with. Could be confusing for children and they would stand out more in their ARMs setting
- Is problem that the current ARMs are not being used because parents do not know about them and therefore do not choose them. Not all parents use the Local Offer or go to SENDIASS for advice.
- Also when professionals come to meet parents at home no one mentions ARMs at all and parents hardly have the time to go on the internet and search for ARMs especially when they are constantly doing other stuff and juggling appointments
- See the child and not the disability allows you to see that they can maintain cognitively in mainstream.
- Parent mentioned that she knows 2 parents who never received letter and is it considered that not everyone is on the internet. Letters received day before Easter Holidays plus on letter no person to contact.
- Special Schools not specific to particular issues such as V.I. (Visually Impaired)
- For Example, child with H.I (Hearing Impaired) where there is no specific special school who are arms going to collaborate with in those circumstances.

Any queries please contact Pat Bolton MBE via [patbolton@parentsinpower.co.uk](mailto:patbolton@parentsinpower.co.uk)