1. Summary

1.1 This report sets out the progress of the Strengthening Specialist Provision (SSP) programme against its key deliverables since March 2011 when the CYP Select Committee last received a monitoring report on the programme.

1.2 The SSP programme aims to strengthen Lewisham’s provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). It was developed in response to a review undertaken in 2006-07 which identified the need to expand the range of specialist provision available in the borough.

1.3 Overall, there has been good progress against the key deliverables of the SSP programme since March. In particular, there has been progression in developing new resource bases for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and changes made to a number of existing resource bases to ensure better value for money; the Parent Partnership Service has been successfully re-tendered; plans for the redevelopment of Brent Knoll school are under way, with consultation due to begin in December; and Service Level Agreements are being rolled out across all resource bases to strengthen monitoring and accountability arrangements for SEN provision.

2. Purpose of report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to:

2.2 Provide an update on the progress of the SSP programme against its key deliverables since March 2011.

2.3 Outline the actions being taken, where necessary, to strengthen the programme and ensure that it remains on track with regards to delivering its key objectives.
3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the CYP Select Committee:

3.2 Note the outcomes of this monitoring report;

3.3 Note the actions being taken to ensure that the programme continues to deliver its strategic aim of strengthening provision for children and young people with SEN.

4. Policy context

Local context

4.1 Lewisham’s Children and Young People’s Plan sets out our vision for improving outcomes for all children. It articulates the need to improve outcomes for children with SEN and disabilities by ensuring that their needs are met.

4.2 The Local Authority has a duty under the Education Act 1996 to secure a sufficient number of school places to meet the needs of the local child population. In particular, it requires the LA to have regard to the need to ensure that special educational provision is made for pupils with SEN. Section 315 requires LAs to keep their arrangements for SEN provision under review.

National context

4.3 The recently published SEN Green Paper contains many important elements for the LA to respond to over the coming months and years. Of particular relevance for the SSP programme is the focus on ensuring that there is a range of educational settings available to meet the needs of all children with SEN, and that parents are empowered to make choices about which of these is most suitable for their child. This is consistent with the SSP programme’s aim to expand the range and quality of specialist provision available in the borough and to strengthen the support available to parents of children with SEN. The paper also indicates that the threshold for statements is likely to increase, the suggestion being that only children with complex and enduring needs will receive statements in future. However, improved teaching will result in better outcomes for those with lower level needs.

4.4 The SSP programme will be developed in line with the new requirements of the SEN Green Paper. Lewisham is one of the Local Authority Pathfinders and will be focussing on the following areas:

- Single assessment and plans
- Payment by results
- Transitions
- Support to parents
5. Background

5.1 Mayor and Cabinet report (October 2007): ‘Strengthening Specialist Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs’

5.1.1 The SSP programme sets out arrangements for strengthening the provision of places for children with SEN. The programme began in 2007 in response to a review undertaken of existing SEN provision.

5.1.2 The review identified a number of issues to be addressed. In particular, it demonstrated that the current provision of specialist places was insufficient and that many children were required to attend schools outside the borough. A significant number of these children had ASD, indicating a lack of provision for this need in particular. Parental choice in terms of placement type was largely restricted to mainstream or special schools.

5.1.3 The review also identified that Lewisham had a relatively high proportion of children with statements of SEN, as well as a significantly higher percentage of children placed in maintained special schools compared with national figures and compared with some other London boroughs.

5.1.4 A report was presented to the Mayor on 3 October 2007 outlining these issues and making recommendations for addressing them. The Mayor agreed to the recommendations proposed. This represented the initiation of the SSP programme, with the 2007 report constituting the Business Case for the programme.

5.2 Children and Young People’s Select Committee report (March 2011): ‘Strengthening Specialist Provision Programme’

5.2.1 On 22 March 2011, CYP Select Committee received a monitoring report which set out the progress of the SSP programme since it was implemented in 2007. It outlined the actions being taken to ensure that the programme continues to achieve its strategic objectives, and adapts effectively to changing circumstances.

5.2.2 The report noted that the programme has been largely successful in achieving intended objectives. Successes include an enhanced range of specialist provision available locally, increased opportunities for mainstream inclusion and strengthened support, in particular for children with ASD.

5.2.3 However, the report also acknowledged that there is still much work to be done, especially given the challenges posed by the recent growth in Lewisham’s primary population, including pupils with SEN, and the increasingly austere financial climate which presents new challenges to which the programme must adapt. In particular, it highlighted a need to strengthen the monitoring and accountability of SEN provision to ensure good value for money, and to increase further the capacity of mainstream settings to support pupils with SEN.
5.3 SSP principles and objectives

5.3.1 The key principles underpinning the programme, and its key objectives, remain the same as originally conceived in 2007:

**Principles**

- Every child who can be should be educated in a mainstream school;
- Support, training and resources should be provided to ensure that mainstream schools are confident and able to provide children with special needs with a high quality education;
- All special schools should have an outreach function, to support and help to develop what mainstream schools offer;
- Children in special schools should have some opportunity, according to their needs, to learn alongside those in mainstream schools;
- Children and young people should be educated locally wherever possible;
- There needs to be a strong partnership between the LA and parents; this requires good services and information;
- Resources from out-of-borough placements should be re-directed into mainstream schools;
- Early recognition of a child’s needs and early intervention are vital. We will ensure that funding is available at an earlier stage, not just through a statement;
- An efficient service for statutory assessment should be maintained for those children who still need it.

**Objectives**

- To ensure that as many children with SEN as possible can learn in their local community;
- To develop a continuum of educational provision;
- To improve partnerships with parents;
- To achieve maximum value from the investment;
- To ensure the safety of our most vulnerable groups.

6. Programme update

The section below outlines the progress made against the key deliverables of the SSP programme since March 2011.

**SSP programme key deliverables**

- Develop an all-age ASD school;
- Redevelop Brent Knoll Special School;
- Strengthen the Parent Partnership Service;
- Develop specialist resource bases in mainstream schools;
- Strengthen the monitoring and accountability arrangements for SEN provision.
6.1 Develop an all-age ASD school

6.1.1 The new ASD school, now named Drumbeat, is on track to open formally as an institution in September 2012, although the new site will not open until Easter 2013. The school will be located on the site of the current Pendragon School, and will offer places for pupils aged 4-19 years. The existing Meadowgate and Pendragon Special Schools will be closed with the pupils from these schools transferring to the new school.

Progress

6.1.2 A key development since the 22 March Select Committee report is the appointment of the new Executive Headteacher for Drumbeat. The appointment began in September 2011, a year before the planned opening of Drumbeat, in order that work could be undertaken with the two existing schools, the LA and the temporary governing body in preparation for the merger into the new school. Preparations include developing plans for Drumbeat to contribute towards strengthening borough-wide support for children with ASD by becoming a ‘hub’ for advice, guidance, training and outreach on ASD across all settings.

6.1.3 On 8 September 2011, CYP Select Committee received a draft Mayor and Cabinet report on the ‘Expansion of Pupil Places at the New ASD School’ for their views before the report was submitted to the Mayor and Cabinet on 5 October 2011. The report outlined a projected shortfall of places at Drumbeat when it opens in September 2012. Reasons for this include the unprecedented increase in the primary population experienced over the past five years, an increase in ASD diagnosis and insufficient capacity in resource bases currently on-stream to absorb the additional demand.

6.1.4 The report proposed a number of options to resolve the shortfall in places. The preferred option presented was to retain the former Meadowgate School site to provide the extra places needed. The Mayor agreed to this option enabling Drumbeat to operate across the two sites beyond Easter 2013 (when the new site is built and ready for occupation). A report will be brought to the Mayor outlining the longer-term demand for additional ASD provision in the borough, especially at post-16 level.

6.1.5 Overall, there is a need to strengthen post-16 SEN provision across the borough, especially in light of the LA’s new responsibility to commission appropriate provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD). In response to this need, a data mapping exercise is being undertaken on current post-16 SEN supply and demand, in order to identify gaps and strengthen future provision. This work will inform decisions about the use of the Meadowgate site, as well as the provision of post-16 places at Brent Knoll, as discussed below.
6.2 Redevelop Brent Knoll Special School

6.2.1 The 2007 report to the Mayor recommended that Brent Knoll school be relocated and redeveloped as a special school for secondary age and post-16 young people as part of the BSF programme. The primary provision would be phased out and replaced by specialist resource bases in mainstream schools.

6.2.2 However, the demand for primary places has grown substantially since 2007. The resulting pressure for mainstream primary school sites meant that the decision was taken to retain the Leahurst road site, to which Brent Knoll would have been relocated, as a primary school site. Additionally, the increase in primary pupils with SEN means that it is no longer possible to phase out the primary places at Brent Knoll. Indeed, there has been a significant increase in the number of primary places required at the school over recent years with funding allocated to provide temporary classrooms for this purpose.

6.2.3 Nevertheless, there is still a need to rebuild Brent Knoll as part of the BSF Programme, as planned from the outset. The existing building does not meet current standards by a significant margin. Previous feasibility studies for the redevelopment of Brent Knoll indicated that redeveloping the school on the existing site would not provide good value for money, nor meet current guidelines. This is because the building is in poor structural condition, does not meet the required functional standards, and presents poor energy conservation characteristics.

Progress

6.2.4 A new feasibility study was commissioned by the BSF Programme Team in early 2011 to examine better value options for rebuilding the school on a new site. This feasibility work has now been completed and a feasible and viable option has been identified on the old Greenvale School site, which is located within ½ km (approximately) of the existing school. Use of the old Greenvale site as the new permanent home for Brent Knoll will result in the site no longer being available as a potential capital receipt on disposal.

6.2.5 A report was taken to the Mayor and Cabinet on 13 July 2011 requesting permission to begin consultation on rebuilding and redeveloping the school ('Brent Knoll School BSF Rebuild – Permission to Consult'). Permission was granted, with consultation due to begin in December 2011. However, this will be subject to final approval with regard to PFS/ DfE funding for the redevelopment. This is expected at the end of November 2011.

6.2.6 The proposal is for the newly built school is to provide accommodation for 164 pupils with Communication and Interaction Needs, ranging in age from 4 to 16, with the possibility of also accommodating post-16 provision. This proposal represents a change in the designation of the school, the numbers being catered for, and potentially, the age profile of pupils. This is in response to the overall increase in demand for Reception places, and for places for all children with SEN across the borough, in particular those with ASD.
6.2.7 The proposal offers flexibility to accommodate post-16 pupils. However, this will depend on final confirmation of affordability, as well as the review currently being undertaken on sixth form provision for LLDDs across the borough, including decisions about the use of the Meadowgate site, as detailed in paragraph 6.1.5.

6.3 Strengthen the Parent Partnership Service

6.3.1 The 2007 Mayor and Cabinet report recommended that the role of the Parent Partnership Service be enhanced in order to strengthen partnership working with parents. This was in recognition of concerns raised about difficulties for parents in dealing with the often bureaucratic SEN process. It was recommended that the current service be re-tendered in order to facilitate the changes needed, with adaptations made to the service specification in order to strengthen provision.

Progress

6.3.2 Following an unsuccessful tender process in 2009, when only the existing provider applied for the new contract, a new tender process has now been undertaken with a successful outcome. Of the 9 pre-qualification business questionnaires received, 7 organisations were invited to submit a full tender. Tenders were invited on 28 September 2011. 4 bids were returned on 28 October. 3 organisations were subsequently invited to attend an interview.

6.3.3 The winning bidder has been approved by the Executive Director for Children and Young People’s Services, with the scrutiny period now complete. The contract will be awarded shortly, with the successful bidder expected to commence service delivery no later than 31 January 2012. The contract will be awarded for an initial period of three years, with the possibility of extension for a further two years at the Council’s discretion.

6.3.4 Additionally, monitoring and accountability of the current and new Parent Partnership Service has been strengthened through enhanced contractual arrangements, quarterly monitoring reports and a newly established steering group. The steering group meets on a quarterly basis. As well as monitoring service delivery, the group serves as a means for the Parent Partnership Service to report to the LA on the views of parents, giving them a voice in informing SEN policy and provision. The SSP programme seeks to develop other means by which parents and carers views can be taken into account, and will work closely with the new providers of the Parent Partnership Service to achieve this. This will include parental involvement in the steering group, and LA attendance at the Parents Forum run by the service. The Parent Partnership Service will also be involved in the LA’s role as an SEN Green Paper Pathfinder, in particular, in relation to the strand on support for parents/carers of children with SEN.
6.4 Develop specialist resource bases in mainstream schools

6.4.1 Developing further SEN resource bases in mainstream schools remains a key objective of the SSP programme. There are now ten specialist resource bases in mainstream schools in the borough, offering a total of 195 resource base places. 16 resource base places are currently available in mainstream schools for pupils with ASD, 26 for pupils with complex needs (physical and medical), 47 for pupils with Hearing Impairment, 41 for pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs, 35 for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulty and 30 for pupils with Dyslexia.

Progress

6.4.2 Work is underway to develop two further resource bases at Deptford Park and Kelvin Grove Primary Schools. However, while Kelvin Grove resource base is progressing well, the Deptford Park resource base has faced a significant challenge in that the original feasibility study for the development has proved unaffordable, prompting officers to consider alternative solutions. The implications of this situation are explained below. The intention is for both resource bases to offer 16 places for pupils with ASD. This is because ASD remains the greatest area of primary need amongst Lewisham residents aged 0-19 with a statement.

New resource base provision

**Deptford Park resource base**

6.4.3 In June 2011, following positive consultation with the school community and other stakeholders, determination was granted from the Mayor to open a resource base for pupils with ASD at Deptford Park Primary School from January 2012. However, the project has since been faced with the challenge of the original feasibility work for the development proving unaffordable within the budget available. Officers will continue to work with the governing body to find alternative solutions, seeking a modification until September 2012 to enable this. However, if an acceptable solution cannot be identified, officers may need to go back to the Mayor to seek a revocation. The modification report will be brought to the Mayor in December 2011. If the project go ahead, for the first academic year, the school will be expected to take up to 4 pupils in key stage 1, rising by 4 each year until the resource base is full with 16 pupils.

**Kelvin Grove resource base**

6.4.4 On 16 November 2011, following positive consultation with the school community and other stakeholders, a statutory change notice was published proposing to establish a 16 place ASD resource base at Kelvin Grove Primary School. The publication of this notice marks the commencement of a six week representation period during which members of the public can comment on or oppose the proposal. Officers will report the outcome of this statutory representation period to the Mayor and Cabinet in January 2012. It is hoped that the Mayor will grant determination at this stage, so that the development
phase can begin in February 2012 and the resource base can open in September 2012.

Changes to existing resource base provision

6.4.5 The 22 March report proposed a number of changes to some of the borough’s existing resource bases in order to ensure maximum value for money, and enable needs to meet effectively. Issues were identified concerning admission profiles for a number of the resource bases that no longer reflected incoming demand, as well as the placement of pupils without statements in resource bases. As a result, the SSP team has been working closely with identified resource bases to address some of these issues. There has been a particular focus on the resource bases at Deptford Green Secondary School and Tidemill Primary School.

Deptford Green resource base

6.4.6 The 22 March report identified a clear need to explore options for developing a resource base for secondary school pupils with ASD. Deptford Green Secondary School was identified as a possible location to develop a secondary school ASD resource base.

6.4.7 The school currently has a resource base for pupils with dyslexia. However, with the further delegation of resources to schools for children with lower level needs, fewer children with dyslexia require statements. Children without statements were accessing the resource base at Deptford Green which does not necessarily provide good value for money. The Inclusion Service is working with mainstream settings to increase their capacity to support the majority of pupils with dyslexia in mainstream classes. Additionally, a fair proportion of the pupils currently accessing the dyslexia provision at Deptford Green come from outside the borough.

6.4.8 For these reasons, the LA has been working with Deptford Green School to consider the possibility of the school offering fewer dyslexia places, reserved only for those with the most severe need, whilst also beginning to offer places for pupils with ASD to contribute towards meeting this unmet need in the borough.

6.4.9 A multi-disciplinary working group have been meeting with the school to consider the options available in moving forward with this proposal. Parents of pupils currently accessing the dyslexia provision have been assured that any changes will not have an adverse effect on their education; they will continue to access the provision on the same terms as they do currently. Officers will be working closely with the school over the coming months in the hope that a suitable option can be identified and developed in time for the proposed changes to be enacted by September 2012.
**Tidemill resource base**

6.4.10 The 22 March Select Committee report noted a low take-up of places at Tidemill resource base despite it being an excellent school which has built up a significant level of expertise in speech, language and communication needs. As a result, the SSP team has been working closely with the school to reconsider its admissions profile and referral pathways, widening its intake and addressing issues with referrals, as well as promoting the resource base amongst parents and professional networks, and introducing a number of assessment placements on a trial basis.

6.4.11 Assessment placements offer an opportunity for children who do not currently have a statement, to access the provision on a short-term basis in order that their needs can be assessed by professionals and decisions can made about their future placement, whether that be at Tidemill or elsewhere. The resource base offers an ideal environment for formal SEN assessments to take place. Moreover, this move is in line with the early intervention agenda which argues that the earlier an intervention takes places, the greater the chances of successful outcomes in the long-term. The provision of assessment placements at Tidemill will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to assess their impact and consider the possibility of extending this model to other resource base in the borough.

6.4.12 As a result of the work undertaken by the LA and the school to address the low take-up of places at Tidemill resource base, there are currently 10 children placed in the resource base out of a possible 12 places. Of these, 6 children are accessing assessment placements. The resource base is now on track to offer 16 places from September 2012. The SSP team is currently working with the school to implement an SLA for the resource base which will clarify the changes made, as well as promoting greater accountability and partnership working between the school and the LA in relation to the provision.

**Changes across all resource base provision**

**Funding**

6.4.13 It was agreed at Schools Forum on 19 January 2011 to change the way in which resource bases places are funded to mitigate the likelihood of funding vacant places and to ensure that funding is directed appropriately. As of this financial year (2011/12), the LA and schools will agree on a set place number to fund on annual basis, which takes into account the current number of pupils accessing the resource base plus a projection for the coming year. This will be agreed at the first of two annual SLA review meetings to take place in October to coincide with the timescales for agreeing the overall schools budget and the schools admissions procedure. This new arrangement is working well with place numbers currently being discussed and agreed upon between the resource bases and the LA in time for proposals to be presented to Schools Forum in January 2012.
Next steps

6.4.14 Provisional funding for resource base capital development has recently been agreed. However, this is dependent on the outcome of the James review which is expected by the end of this year. This funding enables the development of approximately one resource base per year from 2012/13. Based on current SEN data projections, it is clear that there is sufficient demand for at least three further resource bases over the next three years. The SSP team will proceed on this basis, with the hope of developing a further ASD primary school resource base in 2012/13, followed by a secondary ASD resource base/resourced places in 2013/14. There are currently only four secondary school resource bases, none of which are for pupils with ASD. Alongside pursuing the proposal to offer ASD places at Deptford Green, other secondary schools in the borough will be considered for ASD resourced provision. Any developments will ultimately depend on assessments of affordability, feasibility, the outcome of consultation with stakeholders and the agreement of Mayor and Cabinet.

6.4.15 The SSP team will continue to work closely with the Primary Places Programme in identifying and developing resource bases on sites considered for mainstream primary expansion. This approach achieves greater economies of scale as feasibility studies, consultation processes and capital development can be shared.

6.5 Strengthen monitoring and accountability arrangements for SEN provision

6.5.1 The 22 March report highlighted the need for strengthened monitoring and accountability arrangements for SEN provision, particularly in relation to resource bases.

Monitoring resource bases

6.5.2 Monitoring the quality of resource base provision and the progress of pupils in resource bases is now being achieved through the introduction of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for all new and existing resource bases. SLAs clarify the roles and responsibilities of all involved parties, including service delivery aims, funding arrangements, therapy input, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting requirements. They also incorporate clear admissions profiles, including an agreed place number and methods for reviewing these on a regular basis in response to changing needs.

6.5.3 The development and monitoring of SLAs is overseen by resource base working groups, whose primary function is to promote joint working in relation to planning, implementing, and reviewing resource bases. Working groups are comprised of key partners, including the school, Educational Access, Therapies and the Inclusion Service. Tasks include input into planning resource bases (consultation, capital work, and staffing, for example), overseeing implementation and monitoring and evaluating progress once resource bases are established. Meetings are held frequently during the planning and implementation stages, usually monthly. These reduce to twice annually once the resource base is opened.
6.5.4 One of the key functions of an SLA is to clarify the means by which resource base outcomes are monitored and reported. A range of outcomes have been identified for resource bases, including improved academic attainment, increased and improved peer relationships and increased access to mainstream activities and curriculum for pupils, increased staff knowledge and experience of SEN specialisms and increased understanding of SEN by mainstream children without additional needs. In order to monitor success in terms of these outcomes, the SSP team have devised a monitoring system for schools with resources bases, in consultation with the Inclusion and Therapy Services, which combines the need to gather and assess both qualitative and quantitative data on progress and quality.

6.5.5 The monitoring form requests that schools provide information on children’s attainment, via P or National Curriculum Levels, in order that we can measure rates of progress in terms of academic and social skills. Schools will also be expected to complete a self assessment form and gather information from children and staff from the resource base and mainstream, and parents to determine progress for some of the harder to measure outcomes, such as teacher knowledge, peer relationships and pupil’s access to the mainstream curriculum. The monitoring form will be distributed to schools and stakeholders for their views shortly. It is envisaged that the schools will complete the monitoring form twice a year. The information provided in the form will be discussed at the bi-annual monitoring meetings planned with resource bases in May and October each year, in line with a review of the SLA.

6.5.6 We are currently in the process of developing SLAs with the following resource bases: Athelney, Addey and Stanhope, Perrymount, Tidemill, Deptford Park and Kelvin Grove. However, SLAs will eventually be rolled out across all resource bases in the borough.

Monitoring the overall programme

6.5.7 Whole programme monitoring currently takes place via the Project Review Group monthly highlight reports, alongside the re-established SSP Programme Board. The primary purpose of the SSP Programme Board is to drive the programme forward in order to deliver its agreed outcomes and benefits. It achieves this by monitoring progress on all elements of the programme, including processes, communications, handling and initiating remedial action, and managing risk. The SSP programme manager reports to the Programme Board using the programme highlight report as a mechanism for monitoring progress.

6.5.8 Communication with parents and partners on the overall progress of the programme is undertaken primarily by means of a monthly newsletter, SEN Matters. The newsletter is now circulated online via the council and individual school’s websites. All consultation documents on proposed changes to SEN provision are circulated widely to key stakeholders, including publication on the council website for the wider public to access and respond.
7. Originator

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8. Background papers

8.1 CYP Select Committee (March 2011): ‘Strengthening Specialist Provision Programme’

8.2 Mayor and Cabinet (3 October 2007): ‘Strengthening Specialist Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs’

8.3 CYP Select Committee (25 May 2011): ‘ASD Provision and the New ASD School’

8.4 Mayor and Cabinet (5 October 2011): ‘Expansion of Pupil Places at the New ASD School’

8.5 Mayor and Cabinet (13 July 2011): ‘Brent Knoll School BSF Rebuild – Permission to Consult’

If you would a copy of any of these papers, please contact Charly Williams, Strengthening Specialist Provision Programme Manager (0208 314 7013).