

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Provision of high quality autism training for all school staff
Date of decision:	11 December 2019
Decision maker:	Director for Children and Families
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>The Herefordshire all-age autism strategy (2019-22) made a commitment to deliver training to all staff across all agencies in Herefordshire.;</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=50025554</p> <p>As stated within the executive's response to the scrutiny report the executive are supporting the initiative to provide training for school staff in respect of autism.</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6242</p> <p>Under part 4 section 7 of the constitution the finance procedure rules provide delegated authority to enable the Director for children and families to take this decision.</p> <p>Under the council contract procedure rules an exemption to clause 4.6.11 has been sought because there is only a single regional hub that can provide the Autism Education Trust (AET) training programmes (Birmingham Autism Team). Other hubs are not allowed to encroach on their territory. Although there are other autism teams within the West Midlands who are allowed to provide the same service, the Birmingham Hub set the charges for the training as the same as they offer.</p>
Ward:	All Wards
Consultation:	Herefordshire Branch of the National Autistic Society have been consulted with and are supportive of the training being provided. By engaging in this training, all children with autism across the community should have schooling that is more adapted for their needs. This should reduce the number of children with autism experiencing anxiety in relation their schooling which in turn should reduce the knock-on impact on families. It is also the intention that fewer children and young people will need to be placed with independent providers at distance from their homes.
Decision made:	<p>The approach to providing all school staff with a high level of training in relation to autism in line with the commitment within the all-age autism strategy is approved. The Council engages the accredited regional hub of the Autism Education Trust (AET) to deliver high quality professional development to all of Herefordshire's schools over a three year period.</p> <p>The cost of the programme will be £75,000 over the three-year period. A sum of £70,000 has been set aside in the Council's budget to support the implementation and promotion of the Herefordshire all-age autism strategy. The remaining amount of £5,000 will be provided from the remaining balances of SEN Reform Grant, originally provided by the DfE for stimulating developments in relation to SEND and hence this would fit with the conditions of grant.</p>
Reasons for decision:	The Herefordshire all-age autism strategy (2019-22) made a commitment to deliver training to all staff across all agencies in Herefordshire. This report makes

	<p>a recommendation for the delivery of training using a model that is specifically targeted to the school workforce</p> <p>The aim is go beyond ‘awareness-raising’ to professional development input that actually changes practice for the population of children and young people attending Herefordshire’s schools. For this reason, the training accredited by the Autism Education Trust, which is endorsed by the Department for Education is recommended.</p> <p>In order to deliver this training, it is recommended that we engage the services of the local regional AET Training Hub to deliver the programme. The training is nationally accredited hence giving assurance with regard to the quality of the content and delivery.</p> <p>The children and young people’s scrutiny committee met on the 11th March 2019 and approved the report and recommendations from the task and finish group. This contained a recommendation to the executive for the delivery of a ‘comprehensive’ professional development programme to schools and settings covering a wide range of types of SEND. The proposed training forms part of that professional development programme.</p> <p>The proposed model consists of a three-year repeating annual cycle of single full day Level 3 (leadership) events, where it is anticipated that 20-30 school leaders will be trained followed by a full day of Level 2 (professional practice) in each of the 20-30 schools. It will be expected that the Head teacher or other member of the school senior leadership team will attend the leadership training and make a commitment to the full staff group attending the Level 2 training at their own school within 12 months of their Level 3 training. It is expected that they will build this full-day training into their professional development days, although other models of delivery might be possible in negotiation with the provider. It is anticipated that some smaller schools may wish to train together, thus reducing the number of individual training events.</p> <p>It is vital that school leaders demonstrate their commitment to this training programme by personally attending the Level 3 event. It is intended that this training drives a whole-school ethos to make the setting autism-friendly in all aspects of its operation. It has clearly been demonstrated that the personal commitment of senior leaders is the key determinant of the overall ethos.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the AET programme will commence in the spring term of 2020 and will continue in 2022. A fourth year of the programme might be required to capture those schools unable to be involved in the initial 3 years although there will not be additional cost should this happen.</p> <p>As a county with a small population, Herefordshire has a proportionately small number of professionals working in the field of autism. It is difficult to envisage circumstances where there would be the capacity to deliver such an ambitious programme internally. It estimated that it would take at least a further 2 years to train staff to deliver this AET programme and staff have very little capacity beyond their existing roles. For this reason, it is considered expedient to contract the local AET Hub to deliver. They have previously delivered over 500 training events of this nature.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>There is a risk that not enough schools engage with this training programme. This will be mitigated by active promotion of the programme and its benefits of engaging. An aspect of this promotion is that each school or setting will be able to access this high value, high quality training free of charge (except for the need to release staff to access the training).</p>

	<p>There is a risk that the provider will not be able to fulfil the commitment of the 3-year multi-venue training. The risk of this would be covered by an appropriate contract allowing for claw-back of funding where non-delivery had taken place. The provider also has a strong reputational interest in ensuring delivery is completed.</p> <p>There is a risk that the quality of the training is not as expected. If this was to happen, this will be raised through the contract with the expectation that steps would be taken by the provider to rectify any shortcomings. It would be an expectation of the contract that the monitoring of quality through delegate feedback would be in place</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>To train a multi-professional team of trainers to deliver this seeking to become a 'spoke' from the regional hub: This would offer the advantage of building capacity within Herefordshire. The disadvantages would be the length of time that this would take to implement (probably a further 2-3 years). It is also unlikely that sufficient capacity could be identified within the education workforce without backfilling posts or making additional appointments</p> <p>To seek an alternative autism awareness training from other providers: The AET training is seen as the 'gold standard' in terms of the models of training available. It is supported by the local and national organisations of the National Autistic Society (NAS). Although there a number of other training offers, some delivering specifically to education professionals, the aim of this initiative is to go beyond awareness raising to actually influencing professional practice in schools.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed

Date: