

**BRIEFING NOTE –  
OUT COUNTY SEN PLACEMENTS**

*Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families*

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**1. Purpose of Report**

This note is to provide Schools Forum members with a brief overview of out of authority placements including the type of placements made, their costs and the reasons for placement with some comparison with the national picture.

**2. National Picture**

Nationally over 11,000 pupils with SEN are placed in out of authority special schools. Many have complex SEN that are not currently met by local schools. Pupils may have holistic needs that span education, health and social care areas.

A recent Audit Commission report looking into this issue found that expenditure is high and has increased steeply in recent years, although the rate of increase has decreased since 2003-4.

**3. Data and Trends**

- 3.1 In Hertfordshire the number of children with SEN in placed in out of authority independent or non maintained special schools and other independent schools in the last three years is:

Year	2004	2005	2006
Number	219	234	250

- 3.2 The rate of placements per 10,000 of the pupil population in Hertfordshire is at the national average of 9.4 and the cost per Hertfordshire pupil is also at the national average at £67.

The average annual cost per placed pupil in Hertfordshire is a little above the national average at £46,826 compared to £43,921 but the overall costs have increased more than the national average in the past four years.

- 3.3 The children placed most often in specialist provision outside of Hertfordshire are those with behavioural, emotional and social

difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. This is in line with the national picture. In Hertfordshire children with these needs account for over 50% of the placements made.

- 3.4 More children of secondary age than primary are placed in out of authority provision. In the last three years 74% of children placed have been aged over 11, with 34% aged 14 or more at the time of placement. There has also been some additional pressure on out of authority placements arising from the closure of Boxmoor House School in March 2006.
- 3.5 Many of the children placed in out of authority placements have a range of needs, including social care and health needs. Of placements made in the last three years 77% have been residential placements (this is sometimes because of the distance from home rather than a requirement of the child's needs). However, of the residential placements made there has been an increase in 52 week placements and 29% of residential placements made between 2003-6 fall into this category. These are the most expensive placements, sometimes even up to £200,000 per year. Commissioning teams at a local and regional level are working closely together to manage contract and fee increases.
- 3.6 Some out of authority placements are made as a result of a SENDIST (SEN and Disability) tribunal order. In the last two years the tribunal has ordered 8 such placements for Hertfordshire pupils whose parents have appealed against the Local Authority's decision to name a Hertfordshire school as being suitable.
- 3.7 Decisions about out of authority placements are subject to scrutiny through a county panel process. The inter-agency panel meets each month involving representatives from CSF (education and social care) and health.
- 3.8 All children placed out of authority placements are reviewed regularly through the appropriate statutory processes and consideration is given to whether they could return to local provision, particularly at transition points. However due to the volatility of the budget and high costs of individual placements the Schools Forum need to be aware of the risk continued overspend on this budget in 2007-8. The longer term strategy is to reduce reliance on out of authority placements and retain children in local provision. Work is being carried out to analyse the needs, trends and current gaps across education, social care and health to inform future local provision and service planning.

If you would like further information please contact Debbie Orton, Head of Inclusion Services (Tel: 01992 588556).

*References:*

Out of Authority Placements for Special Educational Needs: Audit Commission, February 2007.