

Single Member Cabinet Decision**Executive Forward
Plan Reference****E 3675****New Special School with Co-located Children's Homes**

Decision maker	Cllr Paul May, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
The Issue	<p>To agree an update to the previous Single Member Decision in September 2024 (E 3562) so that Charlton House, Keynsham can be re-purposed into a small, day, special school for 30 young people aged 11-18 with complex special education needs and two, colocated children's homes. Each children's home will offer residential care for up to 4 children/young people. It is anticipated that most, if not all of the young people in the colocated children's homes will attend the Charlton House Special School.</p> <p>In order to meet the Ofsted regulatory requirements for the design and amenities in children's homes, the costs for the project have increased by £660k to £6.760m.</p>
Decision Date	18 th December 2025
The decision	The Cabinet Member agrees that Charlton House, Keynsham should continue to be re-purposed into a special school for 30 day-pupils with highly complex needs, but with a 52-week residential offer for 8 children/young people in total being provided by two colocated children's homes. The Cabinet Member also agree the increase of the budget by £660k to £6.760m funded by borrowing.
Rationale for decision	<p>The Single Member Decision in September 2024 proposed that Charlton House, Keynsham, could be re-purposed into a small residential and day school for young people aged 11-17 with complex special education needs (12 residential and 18 day pupils, 30 in total).</p> <p>£6.1m High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA) Grant funding was approved to carry out the remodelling to accommodate the young people at the new special school. This proposal was based on opening our own provision and commissioning a Multi- Academy Trust (MAT) to run it as a day and residential special school.</p> <p>Following limited engagement from the market, withdrawal of the single tender submission (due to concerns around the MAT running a residential school) and acknowledgement that the need is for 52-week residential provision; it was decided to investigate if the residential element at Charlton could operate as a separately run children's home.</p> <p>A telephone call and follow up meeting with the lead Ofsted Regulatory Inspection Managers for the South-West, Paula Lahey and Polly So confirmed that it would be possible to have a children's home in the same building as a school (it is proposed that this would be located on the top floor of Charlton House).</p>

	<p>A 12-bed children's home would not be deemed suitable by Ofsted. The proposed accommodation area on the top floor of the building should be divided into two entirely self-contained homes, each for 4 CYP with separate entrances and gardens allowing access independent from the school.</p> <p>The capital project will include works to ensure that Charlton House and Hawthorn Court have separate access, security and landscaping to outside areas. It has been agreed with Adult Social Care that they will retain use of the kitchen in Charlton House (which will have a secure boundary with the school) so that meals can continue to be provided to Hawthorne Court and to the new school.</p> <p>Consultation with our parents and carers has highlighted the priority of bringing children closer to home and to their families. Many of the children in the residential homes will continue to have close contact and relationships with their families. By providing these homes in the local area, parents/carers can remain fully involved in all aspects of their child's care for example attending all medical appointments, meetings in person etc.</p> <p>Charlton House is also a five-minute walk away from the social care teams based at Keynsham. It is adjacent to a range of local amenities and activities allowing opportunities for socialisation and for engagement with the wider community. All of which will the improve safety and wellbeing of the children and young people and enhance preparation for adulthood.</p> <p>The project team for Charlton includes our Communications Team as there is a positive story to be communicated around how opening our first children's homes in B&NES aligns with our wider strategy for our most vulnerable CYP and adults, including the Englishcombe Lane project in development by Adult Social Care.</p>
Financial and budget implications	<p>The £6.1m High Needs Provisional Capital Allocation (HNPCA) Grant to carry out the remodelling to accommodate the young people at the new special school has already been agreed.</p> <p>The required remodelling and adaptations to Charlton House to enable the building to meet the Ofsted regulatory requirements for children's homes has led to an increase in the budget of £660k.</p> <p>This can be funded by borrowing from Children's Social Care savings from the reduced residential costs.</p> <p><u>School</u></p> <p>The running costs of the school will be handed over to the Academy Trust who has been chosen via the presumption process. The expectation being that they will be funded on the special school rates of £10k per pupil with the additional top up funding from the banding system which will be at the highest level of band 6, or in some cases at a bespoke level to meet particularly complex needs.</p> <p>The project will reduce the overspend in the DSG and increase the local offer, preventing expensive out-of-county placements. Our safety valve plan states we expect savings of £840k from Charlton based on the current independent average school cost of £88k per annum and an anticipated average education cost at Charlton of £60k.</p>

Additionally, the transport savings would be approx. £15k per child, so £450k, but we are likely to need some transport locally -minibuses etc for group travel so estimated at **£350k**

Children's Homes

The original SMD calculated potential savings from 12 pupils accessing residential school places at Charlton House, compared to the average cost charged by independent residential schools. Following acknowledgement that the residential school option is not appropriate, these savings have been updated.

The revised potential savings reflect the smaller cohort of children supported and the complexity of needs the children will present with. For our children with complex SEND needs who are looked after in residential settings, the severity and range of needs and associated costs vary over time.

For this updated report, we have identified a cohort of children/young people with autism and complex needs who are currently in care and closely align with the likely cohort of this new residential provision. Based on these most up to date costs, the average annual cost is **£407k**. This is more conservative estimate than when we carried out this exercise in June 2025, the 5 most recent placements at that time gave an average annual cost of **£643k**.

This variation in average costs reflects variation in the specific needs of the individual young people at different points in time; for example, additional staffing, waking nights, bed blocking etc.


In addition to this naturally occurring variation, we have yet to complete the tendering process to establish a placement base rate, and it is also sensible to consider possible occupancy scenarios.

In our early engagement with local providers, two have given us (confidential) estimates of the annual cost per child for each of the children's homes. Whilst these costs are only estimates and we have yet to complete the tendering process, including the final costs, they do allow benchmarking against our most current average, annual costs (£407k).

This at present, dependant on occupancy, gives indicative savings of between **£229k and £756k**, sufficient to repayable borrowing of **£53k** per annum.

Issues considered	<p>The gaps in provision for this cohort was identified through a review of the Joint Agency pool which was carried out by an external consultant who contacted families directly. One of the recommendations from this review was for B&NES to have SEND residential provision within area. <i>“More Autism and SEMH service provision is urgently needed to meet demand and to curb the escalation of need of CYP and their families, and referrals to specialist services.”</i></p> <p>By providing educational placements for vulnerable learners within their local community and reducing lengthy journeys to out of county placements the project would enhance social inclusion and meet sustainability requirements.</p> <p>Young people within the specified age range will be accommodated in the provision with no barriers to disability – physical, sensory and mental health difficulties.</p> <p>Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Property; Young People; Equality (age, race, disability, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation); Human Rights; Corporate; Health & Safety; Other Legal Considerations</p>
Consultation undertaken	<p>Cabinet colleagues; Overview & Scrutiny Panel; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Community Interest Groups; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer.</p>
How consultation was carried out	<p>A full public consultation was held on the closure of the care home with the remit of opening the school. Adult Social Care lead the consultation process. The following is the link to the outcome of the consultation:</p> <p>https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s80420/E3513%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Community%20Resource%20Centres%20Consultation%20Report.pdf</p> <p>The following consultation events to share the updated plans for Charlton are planned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24th November 2025– project website and online consultation to go live for a period of 4 weeks. https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/charlton-house-homes-and-special-school • 5th December 2025– stakeholder consultation event – in Charlton House • 12th December 2025– public exhibition (with paper feedback forms)– in Charlton House • 19th December 2025– consultation draws to a close • Team will then consider feedback and make any possible amendments to the design in response to the consultation ahead of a planning application which will be lodged in January 2026.
Other options considered	<p>Other options would be to look for an alternative site, this would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay the opening of the school – implications for the Safety Valve savings. • May have project cost implications. • Would mean that Charlton House will stand empty
Declaration of	<p>None</p>

interest by Cabinet Member(s) for decision:	
Any conflict of interest declared by anyone who is consulted by a Member taking the decision:	None

Name and Signature of Decision Maker/s	 <p>Councillor Paul May Cabinet Member for Children's Services Bath and North East Somerset Council</p>
Date of Signature	18 December 2025
NOT Subject to Call-in	