

## CSEP Team- Meeting with [REDACTED] - SEN Summer Scheme Provision

Monday 18 August 2025

### Attendees:

[REDACTED]

Clar McKenna (EA)

Deirdre Ward (DE)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### Apologies:

None

<b>No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• [REDACTED] welcomed everyone to the meeting.</li><li>• [REDACTED] outlined that the purpose of the meeting was to help the new team at DE to get a better understanding of the issues with SEN Summer Scheme provision following on from the Special School Summer Scheme Review report October 2022 to March 2023 by [REDACTED] and also the Overarching Update report by [REDACTED] in April 2024.</li></ul>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Discussion – Current Position</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It was highlighted that Special School Summer Scheme provision was a highly emotive topic.</li><li>• The Special School Strategic Leadership Group had met in June 2025 and had subsequently raised the issue with the NHT.</li><li>• It was noted that the level of risk with delivering the SEN Summer Scheme provision using the current approach is the biggest issue.</li></ul>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Discussion – History of SEN Summer Scheme Provision</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The history of the SEN Summer Scheme provision in special schools was outlined with 21 SLD schools initially being involved through EA funding complemented by some schools taking part in the Extended School Initiative (ESI).</li><li>• DE subsequently provided additional funding to special schools to support their programmes.</li><li>• The summer scheme provision increased to 31 out of 40 schools delivering a summer scheme.</li></ul>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Discussion – Staffing Issues</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staffing issues are common in Special Schools due to a combination of illness and baseline vacancies which are difficult to fill.</li><li>• There is growth in demand for staff in mainstream provisions in schools.</li><li>• The complexity of need in pupils attending special schools is increasing.</li><li>• The nature of the staff and pupil populations in special schools is rapidly changing.</li></ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The expectation of parents is that the school is open as normal when delivering a summer scheme and this can cause issues.</li> <li>• A Leader in Charge (LiC) is often required to deliver the Summer Scheme provision in special schools.</li> <li>• Emergency cover may be needed at certain times.</li> <li>• If staff who are adequately trained are not available for the Summer Scheme then risks may emerge.</li> <li>• There have been occasions when staff commit to the Summer Scheme but then call in sick on the first day.</li> <li>• Staff on a 52 weeks per year contract may also have the option of taking unpaid leave during the period that the Summer Scheme is being delivered.</li> </ul>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Discussion – Times of Provision</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not a statutory duty for special schools to deliver Summer Scheme provision but it is custom and practice for the 21 schools who have been delivering the programmes over many years.</li> <li>• Most special schools delivering Summer Scheme provision do so for 1 week during the summer as they do not have the capacity to deliver for 2 weeks for every child.</li> </ul>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Discussion – Buildings</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some Summer Schemes have not been delivered in the past due to building works on the special school premises.</li> </ul>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Discussion – Out of Hours Provision</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration may be given to replacing Summer Scheme provision in special schools with out of hours provision which may include a Friday night youth club or 1 day a week for each pupils in special schools throughout the summer.</li> <li>• There are links with the work which [REDACTED] is currently piloting involving health between the hours of 9am to 3pm.</li> </ul>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Discussion – Community Development Worker (CDW)</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meeting took place at Edenmore Golf Club in 2024 which [REDACTED] attended, along with local Councils and community &amp; voluntary groups.</li> <li>• Councils raised the same issues as special schools in relation to difficulty in recruiting staff who were suitably qualified.</li> <li>• Some of the 5 Councils which attended currently include SEN children in their programmes which are open to all and may not accept children with extremely complex needs in all cases.</li> <li>• It was noted that community groups like Solas/Mae Murray/Cedar Foundation could contribute but were not likely to take the lead in delivering a 2 week summer scheme for special school pupils.</li> <li>• A Community Development Worker (CDW) could be attached to a special school to support out of hours provision for pupils in special schools.</li> <li>• This would likely involve the community use of schools policy.</li> <li>• However, councils may have suitable venues which could also be used.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CDW would be trained as a designated teacher and part of the School Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This would form a key part of the governance of the model.</li> <li>• The BUD Club was cited as a good practice model in delivering community based SEN provision for young people.</li> <li>• Brooklands Youth Club <u>aligned</u> to Tor Bank special school was also highlighted as a group which provided provision once per week for SEN children.</li> <li>• The CDW could link with the community &amp; voluntary sector in seeking additional funding streams to support the summer scheme provision.</li> </ul>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Discussion – Funding &amp; Resources</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for the summers schemes in special schools starts in October and DE/EA funding is only awarded in the following April which is considered to be too late.</li> <li>• DE previously advised that children should not be charged for Summer Scheme provision in special schools.</li> <li>• Not every special school took the opportunity of awarding a staff member with TA1.</li> <li>• Leaders in Charge get a LiC amount over and above their normal salary.</li> <li>• EA currently only have 0.2 of a staff member leading on training.</li> </ul>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Discussion- Pressures from the Health Sector</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health are applying pressures to special schools over the summer period in relation to respite groups which are asking special schools to open provide occupational health services when they are closed.</li> </ul>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Discussion – Communication</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to consider moving away from the label of summer scheme provision towards out of hours provision and this being clearly communicated to all stakeholders before Christmas 2025 was encouraged.</li> <li>• Clear messaging to parents and the Special School Strategic Leadership Group needs to be carefully considered.</li> </ul>	
<b>12</b>	<b>Discussion – New Model</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Communities Labour Partnership model recently developed may be worth considering as they involve working with councils in their local area.</li> </ul>	
<b>13</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DE to contact the Special School Strategic Leadership Group to update them on progress.</li> <li>• DE to consider a new model for Special School summer scheme provision.</li> </ul>	
<b>14</b>	<b>Closing</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ██████ thanked everyone for attending.</li> </ul>	