



# Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) Improvement Plan

January 2022

## Purpose of the Plan

To outline proposed operational improvements to Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) in Bristol following an independent review and public engagement on next steps.

## Background

ALP is for pupils who can't attend mainstream educational settings because of health, emotional or behavioural reasons.

Bristol City Council's (BCC) ALP Hub can arrange and commission alternative education provision in Bristol, from a range of alternative providers on the Local Authority's behalf. The ALP Hub also offers support and advice to schools, other commissioners, professionals, parents and carers, and alternative learning providers.

BCC published an [independent review](#) of ALP in June 2021. The review made 31 recommendations for improvement in the ALP system. The council has accepted all the recommendations.

The independent review made recommendations to improve process, procedures (including safeguarding), commissioning, data and finance, between ALP, special educational needs and disability (SEND) service, schools and Post-16 progression/provision. The review also highlighted a need for more specialist placement provision in Bristol.

This plan addresses the review's operational, short-term recommendations, identifying deliverables to be achieved by September 2022.

## Engagement and Governance

Engagement has been central to ensuring our plans are fit for purpose.

In October and November 2021, BCC held 16 stakeholder sessions focused on the review recommendations and themes, as well as the draft improvement plans. Some sessions were presented as an overview with others focussing specifically on SEND, Schools, Data, Finance, Safeguarding, Post-16 & Careers and Post-16 Young Parents.

Sessions were attended by over 50 participants, with many attending more than one session. Participants were asked to comment on draft recommendations and suggest areas for further consideration. Further stakeholder feedback was sought through questionnaires and an online survey.

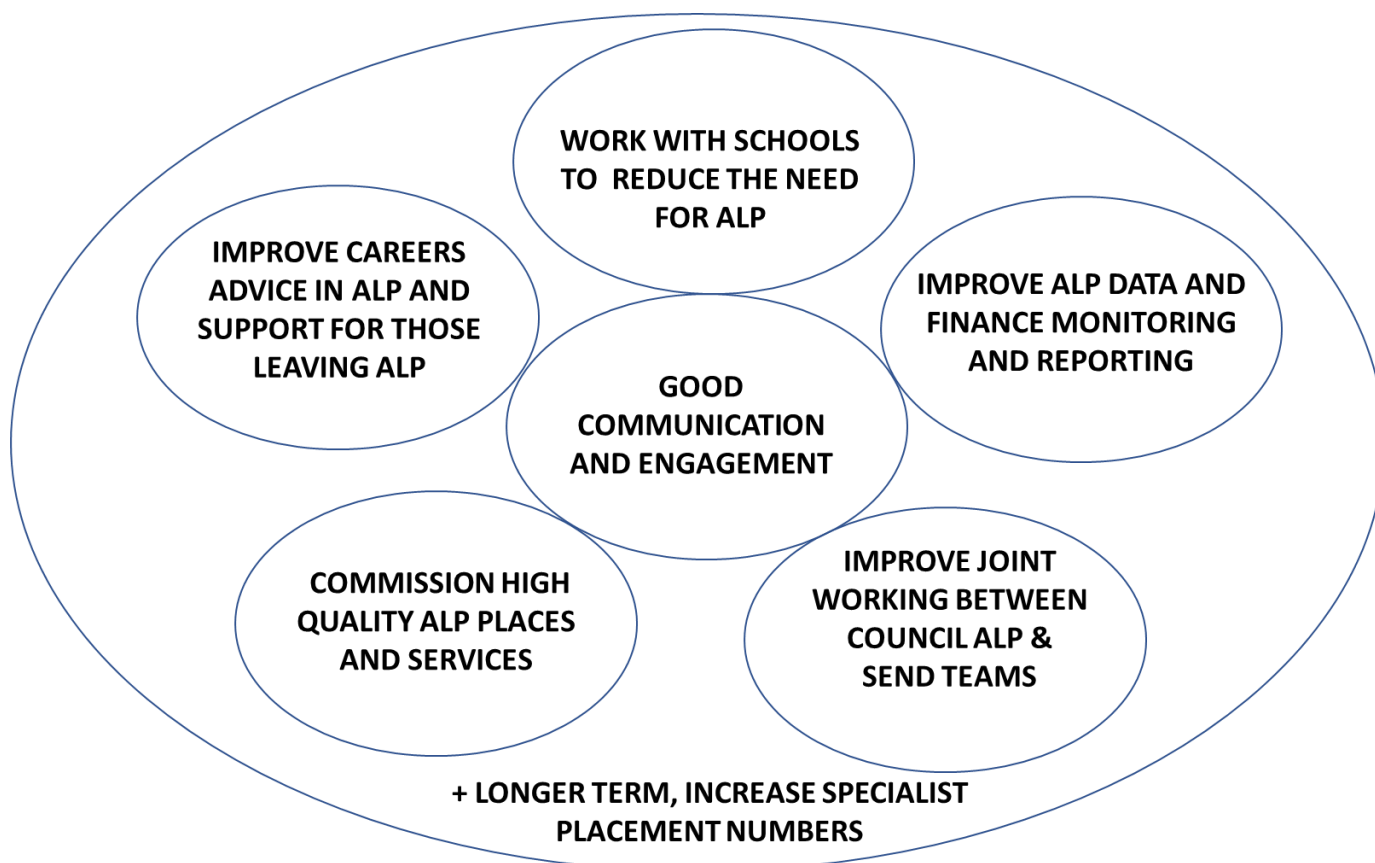
The stakeholders who did engage were mainly professionals. Despite best efforts to engage children, young people and families, including offering additional sessions at various times during the day and evening, uptake was low. We will continue to build-in parent and children's voices in ongoing service evaluation and development.

With regards to governance, this plan and project is overseen by the Education Transformation Programme Board. The Board is responsible for driving the actions set out in this improvement plan and is chaired by the Director for Education and Skills. Progress is also reported to the SEND Improvement Board every two months from February 2022.

## Plan Priorities

Recommendations in the ALP Review have been grouped into six interlinking themes for delivery.

**Chart 1. Priority Areas**



**Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP** is concerned with supporting and challenging schools with the aim of implementing a graduated response to prevent exclusions and reliance on



ALP. It also covers the strengthening of systems for sharing key information between school and ALP.

**Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting** indicates improvement in data capture to facilitate accurate planning and reporting. All ALP cost-codes are to be brought into one place, so the information is clearer to monitor and manage, alongside the agreement of clearer working arrangements between council ALP and SEND services.

**Improve joint working between Council ALP and Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND) teams** refers to the current inter-dependency between SEND and ALP with actions to clarify and strengthen processes and relationships between these two areas. There are high numbers of pupils with SEND with either education, health and care (EHC) plans or proceeding through the EHC needs assessment process, currently in ALP.

**Commission High Quality ALP Placements and Services** delivers a new ALP commissioning framework by September 2022. This aims to ensure higher quality provision, better monitoring and value for money.

**Improve Careers Advice in ALP and support for young people leaving alternative provision** will improve careers advice and guidance to young people in and leaving ALP and is concerned with moving Post-16 service support and funding for young people back into one service area within the Local Authority to improve efficiency and quality.

Underpinning all of this will be continued **Good Communications and Engagement** between the ALP Service, schools, providers, parents, carers and young people.

## **Progress Made**

- appointed additional project and service resource through to March 2022 to deliver improvements
- established fortnightly operational improvement groups (e.g., data, finance, SEND, schools, safeguarding and commissioning)
- supported widespread consultation (16 events) activity on improvement planning
- obtained Cabinet approval to establish a new ALP service commissioning framework to improve oversight, quality and value for money
- created 78 specialist school placements (separate to this plan), with a target of 450 to be achieved by September 2023

## **Next Steps**

### **By March 2022**

- agreed processes and procedures and training for:
  - SEND-Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)
  - graduated response
  - safeguarding
- improved data and finance for ALP, so we can better understand trends and manage the service
- improved Local Offer (LO) communications on ALP on web page
- Improved and more Employment and Skills provision for Young Parents previously or in ALP but linking up ALP support with wider Employment and Skills activities.
- established a clear forward plan for further improvements and communications
- consolidation of budgets


### **By September 2022**

- a clear commissioning framework in place
- practical day-to-day delivery of agreed processes and procedures
- continue to work towards achieving more specialist placements and be on track to deliver 450 by September 2023
- improved contract management

## APPENDIX 1. Detailed Plan

**Table 1. List of Recommendations and Progress So Far**

Theme	The Independent Review said	What professionals and parents said	Progress so far
<b>Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP</b> Links to recommendations 2, 16, 19, 20, 21, 26 and 27	<p>Protocols regarding 'graduated response' from schools need to be drawn up. This includes the need to establish a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Pathway including common language for reporting and recording.</p> <p>Consider appropriate resource to adequately embed the safeguarding principles and quality assurance (QA) process.</p> <p>A review of early intervention to schools, support advice and challenge to prevent exclusions and reliance on ALP.</p> <p>A deeper understanding of the 'hard to reach' and 'hard to place' pupils would be helpful in tailoring better educational, social and mental health support. Obtain the pupil and parent voice.</p>	<p>Professionals said placements can be too expensive for a school to fund.</p> <p>There is inconsistency between schools – what one thinks is a crisis is different across settings.</p> <p>There are statutory duties on the sharing of appropriate information, but no unified approach across the city and can be challenging for settings.</p> <p>Young people need to be supported into new settings, both into and away from ALP.</p> <p>A trauma informed approach needs to be rolled out across the city, including the police and other agencies.</p> <p>Need unified approach on expectations on how schools and council services do this together, including shared language and approach.</p>	<p>These points are being addressed by development of pathways and training for schools to support Social, Emotional and Mental Health and Graduated Response. This will be completed and rolled out by March 2022.</p> <p>In addition, a Safeguarding Liaison Officer Post has been appointed to start in January 2022, after which a delivery and QA plan will be undertaken. This will help realise the <i>Bristol Belonging Strategy: Belonging in Education 2021-2024</i>, published in October 2021.</p> <p>Placement move support is covered in ALP Commissioning Framework to be delivered in September 2022.</p> <p>Early Intervention review to be completed by March 2022 alongside plan.</p>
<b>Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting</b>	<p>Migration onto the one system needs to be successfully completed as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Professionals noted:</p> <p>CYP with EHC plans can be at home for long periods waiting for funding to be signed-off.</p>	<p>Common reporting data set agreed December 2021.</p>

<p>Links to recommendations 4, 5, 9, 10, 13, 23 and 24</p>	<p>A common language is needed to ensure all data input is consistent.</p> <p>Cost centres and budget lines need to be agreed and match. Officers are unable to meet budget expectations and controls; this needs to be rectified.</p> <p>As a matter of urgency there is a need for a High Needs/Block placement spending protocol/panel.</p>		<p>Cost code identified so far has been migrated to ALP Service to ensure common oversight and management – more activity may follow.</p> <p>Data-entry onto one system work continues to ensure accuracy, with the aim to complete by March 2022, subject to technical viability.</p>
<p><b>Improve Joint Working between Council ALP and SEND Teams</b></p> <p>Links to Review recommendations 3, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 22</p>	<p>Clear expectations and protocols between ALP Hub and SEND teams need to be agreed and clarified covering: decision-making on placements and expenditure.</p>	<p>Parents said improvements in information and guidance about ALP are needed.</p> <p>Professionals said, clearer and faster placement and funding approval processes needed, including better information sharing between agencies.</p>	<p>SEND team no longer commission individual bespoke ALP packages, except in emergencies.</p> <p>Process map and procedures drafted and to be agreed by January 2022.</p> <p>SEND Written Statement of Action and Sufficiency Plan completed.</p> <p>Sufficiency plan for 450 SEND specialist placements by September 2023 is underway.</p>
<p><b>Commission High Quality ALP Places and Services</b></p> <p>Links to Review recommendations 1, 17, 18, 25, 30 and 31</p>	<p>A clear strategic joint SEND/ALP commissioning needs analysis and plan should be published to ensure value for money, quality of provision, clear monitoring process and contract security.</p>	<p>Parents said, there needs to be greater range of ALP especially where GCSEs and A-Levels aren't appropriate.</p> <p>Professionals also said that children and young people (CYP) with EHC plans can be at home for long periods waiting for funding to be signed off.</p>	<p>Needs Analysis completed and Commissioning Framework approved by Cabinet to tender January 2021 (delivery from September 2022).</p> <p> Appendix A - ALP Commissioning Strate</p>

<p><b>Improve Careers Advice in ALP and Support Those Leaving ALP</b></p> <p>Links to recommendations 28 and 29</p>	<p>Improve careers advice and guidance, especially to the group of 'hard to reach' young people going into college settings</p> <p>Move Young Parents budget, staffing and responsibility into the LA.</p>	<p>Improve Training and Employment Support Information and Advice in ALP settings in Bristol.</p> <p>Young parents said they need support for access to training in local areas, flexibility and childcare.</p> <p>Professional advised involving young parents in shaping services going forward.</p>	<p>Careers requirements are built into the commissioning framework – to commence with new contracts from September 2022. Access to careers advice will be part of the quality assurance process of the ALP Hub.</p> <p>Position Statement and Equality Impact Assessment drafted to move services into Employment, Learning and Skills (Participation Team) to ensure a joined-up approach and access wider support resources.</p> <p>Proposal to create working group involving young people and staff and to deliver by March 2022.</p>
<p><b>Good Communications and Engagement</b></p> <p>Links to recommendations 6,7 and 8.</p>	<p>To ensure clear links between plans to reduce duplications and increase opportunities to join workstreams together.</p>	<p>Parents said they would like more information about the process for a young person moving into ALP and that communication with parents needs to improve.</p>	<p>Clear improvement plan in place and this plan will be published and distributed by January 2022.</p> <p>Update ALP information on the LO website and sense check with parents by March 2022. Utilise the LO Facebook channel to update parents and carers about ALP.</p>

**Table 2. List of Independent Review Recommendations and Status as of December 2021**



No	Review Recommendation	Theme Addressing This Recommendation	Status December 2021
1	A clear strategic joint SEND/ALP commissioning plan should be published.	Commission High Quality ALP Places and Services	Completed
2	Protocols regarding Graduated Response from schools need to be drawn up.	Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP	Mar-22
3	Clear expectations and protocols between ALP Hub and SEND teams need to be agreed and clarified.	Improve Joint Working between council ALP and SEND Teams	Jan-22
4	Migration onto the one system needs to be successfully completed as soon as possible.	Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting	Mar-22
5	A common language is needed to ensure all data input is consistent.	Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting	Apr-22
6	To ensure clear links between plans to reduce duplications and increase opportunities to join workstream together.	Good Communications and Engagement	Mar-22
7	The One City Plan has recently updated for 2020, the outcomes and actions from this review need to directly link to service planning of ALP.	Good Communications and Engagement	Completed
8	The <i>Bristol Belonging Strategy for Children and Young People 2021-2024</i> is published.	Good Communications and Engagement	Completed
9	Cost centres and budget lines need to be agreed and match.	Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting	Completed
10	Officers are unable to meet budget expectations and controls, this needs to be rectified.	Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting	Mar-22
11	SEND team do not commission individual bespoke ALP packages. Procurement arrangements need to be agreed by Senior Officers of ALP and SEND.	Improve Joint Working between Council ALP and SEND Teams	Completed
12	Sufficiency plan of SEND placements is underway but a plan of how to manage and fund the SEND pupils in ALP provision in the meantime needs to be drawn up and agreed.	Improve Joint Working between Council ALP and SEND Teams	Mar-22
13	As a matter of urgency there is a need for a High Needs/Block placement spending protocol/panel.	Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting	Completed



14	A system for joint monitoring, quality assurance and co-ordination of all ALP placements with SEND needs to be established.	Improve Joint Working between Council ALP and SEND Teams	Sep-22
15	A review of pre EHCP funding is urgently needed as this is not a normal part of the SEND code of practise.	Improve Joint Working between Council ALP and SEND Teams	Completed
16	Consider appropriate resource to adequately embed the safeguarding principles and QA process. A dedicated QA post (is being explored and the management of that post reviewed). The appointment to this post would allow an independent check on providers.	Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP	Sep-22
17	Clarify Service Level Agreement expectations across all settings.	Commission High Quality ALP Places and Services	Sep-22
18	BCC should ensure that the resources are available to satisfy itself of the financial and educational ongoing viability of providers.	Commission High Quality ALP Places and Services	Sep-22
19	Establish a SEMH Pathway including common language for reporting and recording.	Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP	Sep-22
20	Paperwork and graduated response from schools should be evidenced prior to any Bristol Inclusion Panel referral.	Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP	Sep-22
21	A review of early intervention to schools, support advice and challenge to prevent exclusions and reliance on ALP.	Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP	Mar-22
22	SEND Written Statement of Action and Sufficiency Plan completed.	Improve Joint Working between Council ALP and SEND Teams	Completed
23	Capital Investment Strategy completed.	Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting	Completed
24	Develop as a matter of urgency a protocol for SEND and high-cost placements with ALP Hub to enable appropriate placements.	Improve ALP Data and Finance Monitoring and Reporting	Mar-22
25	Clarify expected response timescales with ALP providers.	Commission High Quality ALP Places and Services	Sep-22
26	A deeper understanding of the 'hard to reach' and 'hard to place' pupils would be helpful in tailoring better educational, social and mental health support. Obtain the pupil and parent voice.	Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP	Sep-22

27	Clarify and strengthen the “Graduated school response” (with schools before a managed move takes place, ensuring they do everything possible first), insisting on safeguarding information before placement agreements.	Work with Schools to reduce the need for ALP	Sep-22
28	Improve Careers Advice and Guidance, especially to the group of 'hard to reach' young people going into college settings.	Improve Careers Advice in ALP and Support Those Leaving ALP	Sep-22
29	Move Young Parents budget, staffing and responsibility into the LA (ESFA Post-16 funding – possibly a separate strand).	Improve Careers Advice in ALP and Support Those Leaving ALP	Mar-22
30	Consider how to appropriately support and challenge schools around the areas of inclusion and exclusions.	Commission High Quality ALP Places and Services	Sep-22
31	Carry out a comprehensive needs analysis of ALP.	Commission High Quality ALP Places and Services	Sep-22