

# BRIEFING REPORT

## Provision of Alternative Education Provision service



### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report is in relation to the procurement of an Alternative Provision (AP) service and a coordinated Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) framework for Plymouth.

The purpose of this procurement is to secure a high-quality, legally compliant, and outcome-focused system that meets the Council's statutory duties under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 and Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014. These duties require the Council to arrange suitable, full-time education for children and young people who cannot attend mainstream school due to exclusion, illness, or other reasons, and to provide EOTAS where an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) specifies education outside a school setting.

1.2. The commissioned service will deliver registered AP schooling, outreach and preventative support, and tailored EOTAS packages. Provision will include education for pupils who are permanently excluded, at risk of exclusion, medically unwell, or requiring reintegration support. The service will also ensure robust safeguarding, equality compliance, and partnership working with schools, families, and multi-agency partners.

### 2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Plymouth requires a strategic AP and EOTAS solution to address rising demand and complexity in pupil needs. Current arrangements are fragmented, with limited capacity for outreach and reintegration, and variable quality in off-site education. Demand for EOTAS has grown significantly, particularly for pupils with complex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and health needs. Without a co-ordinated system, the Council risks non-compliance with statutory duties, inconsistent outcomes for vulnerable learners, and escalating costs through out-of-area placements.

2.2. The proposed procurement will establish a single, integrated framework that combines AP and EOTAS under one governance and quality assurance structure. This approach will deliver a continuum of provision from early intervention to full-time alternative education, ensuring every child in Plymouth who cannot access mainstream education receives suitable, high-quality learning that promotes wellbeing and long-term success.

### 3. PROPOSED CHANGES AND PROCUREMENT PROCESS

3.1. A hybrid open light touch framework and delegated funding model is recommended under the Procurement Act 2023. The Council will use this hybrid model to ensure proportionate and flexible processes while maintaining transparency and fairness. An open light touch framework will admit multiple providers and enable controlled refresh over time, ensuring resilience and specialist coverage across AP and EOTAS while the delegated funding for school-led commissioning will provide schools with the option to purchase AP directly from the approved list of providers under the relevant Lot or schools may choose to develop internal interventions. The contract term will be three years, with an option to extend for up to two years, subject to performance and funding. The estimated annual value is £5.9 million, funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (High Needs Block) and DfE per-place AP funding, supplemented by top-up contributions for individual placements.

3.2. The framework will include:

- Registered AP schooling for up to 200 full-time equivalent (FTE) pupils across Key Stages 1-4.
- Outreach and preventative services to reduce exclusions and support reintegration.
- Individualised EOTAS packages for pupils whose EHCP specifies education outside school.

- A broad, balanced, and accredited curriculum tailored to pupil needs.
- Robust safeguarding, equality compliance, and performance monitoring.

#### 4. RISK

4.1. The following are risks which have been considered as part of the process of contingency planning:

Risk	Possible Impact
Market capacity shortfall	Insufficient places for pupils; delays in meeting statutory duties; increased reliance on costly out-of-area provision.
Estates readiness issues	Premises not compliant or available on time; disruption to service start; safeguarding concerns.
Cost escalation	Budget pressures; reduced flexibility to meet complex needs; risk of overspend against High Needs Block.
Safeguarding incident	Harm to a child; reputational damage; regulatory intervention; urgent corrective measures required.
Reintegration delays	Longer AP/EOTAS placements; increased costs; reduced attainment and wellbeing outcomes.
Data protection breach	Loss of sensitive pupil data; ICO enforcement; reputational harm; need for immediate remediation.
TUPE complexities	Staff uncertainty; mobilisation delays; potential legal disputes; impact on service continuity.
Over-reliance on single provider	Reduced resilience; limited choice; risk of service failure during peak demand or provider exit.

4.2. To ensure resilience and quality across the system, the open framework will include multi-provider participation, location-based allocation of pupils, and review points to monitor performance and capacity. Safeguarding audits, DPIAs, and secure MIS will underpin compliance, while early HR/legal due diligence will manage workforce transitions. Reintegration targets will be supported by strong outreach capacity embedded within the framework.

#### 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The financial implications for the procurement and contract award are as follows: The estimated annual contract value is approximately £5.8 million, funded primarily through the Dedicated Schools Grant (High Needs Block) and DfE per-place AP funding, with top-up contributions for individual placements and locally negotiated outreach arrangements. The financial model reflects national funding structures for AP and ensures transparency and control.

5.2. Value for money will be achieved through early intervention and outreach to prevent exclusions, time-bound reintegration to reduce placement durations, and quality assurance of EOTAS packages to avoid duplication. The approach is expected to reduce reliance on out-of-area placements, improve attendance and attainment, and lower the long-term risk of pupils becoming NEET (Not in education, Employment, or Training), delivering both financial and social benefits.

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

A tentative timeline is as follows:

Phase	Key Activities	Target Dates
Market engagement	Supplier briefings; soft-market testing; publication of preliminary market engagement notice	Mar-June 2026
Tender publication	Issue ITT under open light touch framework route	July 2026
Evaluation & moderation	Technical and commercial evaluation; governance sign-off	Aug-Oct 2026
Standstill and award	Contract award and publication of notices	Nov-Dec 2026
Mobilisation	Safeguarding audits, premises readiness, workforce/TUPE, DPIA, stakeholder communications	Jan-Mar 2027
Service commencement	Full go-live for AP and EOTAS	1 April 2027