

Schools' Forum Meeting

27 September 2017

Attendees:

Members

Mark Tilling (MT) (Secondary Schools) (**Chair**)
 Stephen Hammond (SH) (Academies)
 Neil Nottingham (NN) (Primary Academies >50%)
 Jo Heaton (JHe) (Diocese of Durham)
 Julie Thomas (JT) (Primary Academy >50%FSM)
 Lynn Chambers (LC) (Primary Academies >25 <50)
 Sue Sharpe (SS) (Large – Deprived – Primary)
 Penny Thompson (PT) (Early Years)
 Helen O'Brien (HO) (Large Primary Schools
 FSM<50%)
 Zoe Westley (ZW) (Special Schools)
 Chris Simmons (CS), Governor
 Alan Chapman (AC) (Academies)
 Kieran Sharp (KS) (Student Support Unit)
 Tracey Gibson (TG) (Secondary Schools)
 Mary Frain (MF), (VA Schools Large & Mid FSM<
 50%)
 David Turner (DT), (Small)
 Mandy Hall (MH), (Academies)
 Mike Cooney (MC) (VA small)

Local Authority Officers

Mark Patton (MP) (Assistant Director
 Education)
 Joanne Smith (JS) (Children's Finance)
 Sandra Shears (SSh) (Children's Finance)
 Louise Allen (LA), Head of Service for Children
 (SEND)
 Danielle Swainston (DS), Assistant Director
 Children's Services
 Judith Oliver (Administrator)

Observers

Emma Straker, Catcote
 Paul Thompson, Chair of Governors,
 Springwell

Agenda Item	Action
1. Apologies for absence – None received	
2. Minutes of Previous meeting and matters arising The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2017 have not been finalised as yet, and will be circulated with the minutes of the meeting today. A number of questions were raised at, and following, the last meeting, and a Questions and Answers sheet has been circulated. The report in relation to the High Needs Block Review has been slightly updated, amendments were highlighted in yellow, and re-circulated prior to the meeting.	

<p>3.</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p>	<p>High Needs Block Review (D)</p> <p>MP noted that following discussion of the paper on the High Needs Block a series of votes will take place, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. agree the proposed Range model (para 8.8) b. agree the transfer of £0.550m from the Schools Block to the HNB and commit to this transfer for a period of at least three years (para 8.10) c. agree that the local authority should refer a disapplication request to the Secretary of State to disapply the MFG regulations in respect of the Special Schools from 2021/22 (para 8.10) <p>A query was raised with the Department of Education in relation to item c and a response has yet to be received, so the meeting is not expected to provide a response to this point at this time. An additional meeting may be required to discuss further. It is anticipated that a response will be received within the next few weeks.</p> <p>SS suggested finding out a point of view of the Forum today in relation to MFG to see if there is need to pursue further. Whilst a view can be taken on this at the meeting today, the full implications of the decision on Schools' Forum will not be known until a response has been received.</p> <p>SS wished to express her concerns in relation to the tight timescales that have been imposed on Schools' Forum in relation to the High Needs Block Review Paper. The timescales have not given groups enough time to have in-depth dialogue for the schools she represents, and further conversations with colleagues would be appreciated. JT and LC also expressed the same concerns, and being unable to consult with all the schools they represent due to the timescales.</p> <p>MP noted that the local authority is bound by statutory timescales and the times that have to make returns in. MP aware that this has taken longer than anticipated to review, but the local authority is working to the timescales of the DfE.</p> <p>SS noted that the group of heads she represents appreciates the work of the local authority, and they have spent half a day going through the paper in order for SS to be able to fully represent their views, however, the group do feel under pressure to make decisions.</p> <p>MP noted that a report responding to the High Needs Block Review will be submitted to Children's Services Committee on 17 October 2017 and the date has been shared with Schools' Forum. There is the opportunity for colleagues who are members of the Committee to feed back on their points of view. MP could discuss with the Chair of Children's Services committee to see if a further verbal update to the published report could be provided at the meeting. A further Schools' Forum could also take place before Children's Services Committee to help provide further feedback to Committee. SS confirmed this would be helpful to the group she represents if the Chair is amenable to that.</p> <p>TG expressed concern around the proposed range model and the issue of moderation. SENCOs are currently working the range model and there has been an issue with moderation. TG asked if moderation will continue, and where will the time and money come from to undertake this.</p>	<p>MP</p>
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Anne Hayward and Sarah Mincher initially undertook moderation. Moderation will continue, and a panel will be established in terms of agreeing funding, and some panel members will be asked to form part of the moderation group moving forwards. TG noted the documentation in relation to the moderation process was not clear, however, now understands that the local authority will continue moderation as applications are received.

- 3.7 JHe noted that the solution to be voted upon is a short term solution and a longer term solution needs to be found. JHe asked if there have been other proposals looked at or modelled whilst looking for a solution. Schools' Forum are asking questions regarding value for money, different funding elements, and yet there has only been one proposal presented. Whilst Schools' Forum may vote in favour of this solution, there may have been a different proposal that would lead to a longer term solution. Different forum are discussing that they don't want to see cuts to front line children's services and vulnerable children, and also the Council Plan states that there will be investment in young people, however, this is only a short term solution, and would like to see the other proposals that have been looked at, to see if the proposals tabled today is the best one for schools and young people.

MP is of the opinion that the proposal tabled will fix the problem in terms of stopping the High Needs Block from overspending.

- 3.8 JHe responded that in her opinion it was only short term, as there hasn't been any progression on provision in Hartlepool, and a provision isn't formed then costs will escalate in the coming years.

MP noted that as the amount of young people change over years, then the funding model will respond to the changes. Currently know the children and which bands they fit into, and also know the amount of central government money available, and a model has been built around this to take the needs of the children and match to appropriate spend. This, unfortunately, leaves little room for manoeuvre.

MP noted that the model presented is a good model, and will bring the budget back to where it should be within the next 1 to 3 years time.

- 3.9 JHe asked if an exercise has been undertaken in relation to looking at cuts in different areas, as in 5.5. MP noted that the local authority haven't looked at transferring money from different funds, however, this could be looked at if required.

JHe referred to the Small Steps Team, and asked if this has been evaluated, for example.

- 3.10 MT asked if the proposed model was going to create more uncertainty rather than certainty, as there may be the need to come back to Schools' Forum in the next year stated that banding figures will need to be looked at again, which will cause further financial cuts to schools.

MP noted that things cannot be left as they are, as the High Needs Block is facing nearly £1m overspend by the end of the year. A model has been produced that can be flexible and will respond to future needs, and clearly states what needs to be undertaken going forwards. MP does not know what other model can be devised to make the savings.

- 3.11 MT noted that if bandings are changed year on year, then this creates uncertainty for heads and also issues in relation to recruitment and retention of staff.
- 3.12 SS asked what the plan is for reducing out of school placement, as concerned that these placements are going to increase rather than decrease.
- MP noted work has been undertaken to understand whether children currently placed out of town could have their needs met in Hartlepool, and the majority of these out of town placements Hartlepool schools have already said that they cannot meet the needs of the child. There are also a number of placements where a Hartlepool placement is not appropriate. There is a small proportion of out of town placements could be met in Hartlepool, and this can be looked at as part of the wider review.
- 3.13 SS asked if there was a large increase in out of town placements, then there needs to be some form of provision that currently isn't in Hartlepool urgently, in order for placements to remain in Hartlepool.
- MP noted that the proportion of placements that a new provision may be able to meet needs is relatively small. LA noted that with the current level of need the cases are very complex, and children have impact of early life trauma, development needs, etc, which is a very specialist provision would be required to meet needs.
- SS noted that if this is the case, then stronger links with education and social care are required to ensure that those children are in the system as early as possible, to try and engage with these children early, so that placements aren't required later in their life.
- LA noted that this links with the review in terms of ARPs, and offering SEMH support. Do need to have a resource to start identifying and meeting needs in earlier stages.
- 3.14 SS noted that schools become frustrated as they can see the need in children, however, the provision isn't available to help meet the needs.
- 3.15 There is an element of children placed out of town, where potentially some re-modelling work in relation to SEMH provision could meet needs earlier, but there are children who have experienced trauma in early life who are placed out of town. DS does not think that Hartlepool has the experts and specialist for the trauma based care and this is expensive to deliver a very specialist provision.
- SS noted that schools can see the impact of trauma early in a child, however, as there isn't the provision to meet the needs, schools have to pay for intervention which is expensive.
- 3.16 AC noted that due to proposed cuts in MFG funding over the next three years that -Catcote would not be able to function and would close. This will be devastating for Hartlepool and the SEMH community.
- Hartlepool has a statutory responsibility to meet the needs of their children and Catcote and Springwell are full, and children will have to remain in mainstream where the needs of the children will not be met.

- AC noted that it is a compounding problem and will only become worse as children get older and their needs change and become more complex and deteriorate.
- JHe stated it is important that funding is not cut for these placements as both Catcote and Springwell are at full capacity, which shows that both schools are needed.
- 3.17 TG referred to the ARPS placements in the town and asked if 16 was the current number of vacancies, and if so there are a number of children that would currently benefit from such a provision. Confirmed that there are currently 16 vacancies that are being funded.
- MT clarified that there have been a number of changes to ARPS over the last 2 years and the bandings can make it difficult not to get these placements, the process must be fair and transparent. MT noted that there are currently 4 placements empty, whilst a provision is being built at High Tunstall. He also noted that the LA claw-back AWPU funding back from schools. even on vacant places.
- 3.18 JHe referred to the number of pupils who are accessing residential placements, and asked what the figures are for children who are funded solely by education.
- There is a breakdown of these figures in 5.3 of the High Needs Block Review report, and there are currently 23 day pupils who are solely education funded.
- 3.19 CS reiterated his comments of the meeting on 21 September 2017 that extra capacity needs to be provided in Hartlepool, to release the pressure for schools. CS asked if there was any capital available to try and meet the costs in Hartlepool rather than children having to access provision out of town, whilst accepting that for some children placements will need to be out of town for social reasons.
- MP said that there is capital available, however, revenue funding isn't available.
- 3.20 MP noted that Catcote and Springwell are always consulted to see if there is a placement for a child before they are placed out of town, and they do say if they can't meet the needs of the children. Catcote and Springwell will always be consulted to see if there is a placement, and if they can't meet the need then children will be placed out of town.
- AC confirmed that Catcote did change their admissions policy in relation to SEMH because they couldn't meet the needs of the children who had a prior attainment of 5A*-C including English and maths. Catcote do not have the skills to deliver the GCSE courses and, therefore, unable to offer placements to these children. AC explained that due to change in funding for Post 16 that they would only receive the funding for the current number of placements and not the number of units. Catcote now take SEMH and have more children than ever before and placements are not refused. The provision will to be extended if further placements are required as Catcote is almost full.
- 3.21 JHe asked for reassurances in relation to the banding ranges and the policy document being in draft format, and that schools will be consulted on the final document. Some schools that JHe represents have concerns regarding the paperwork and the gaps in funding.

LA noted that a meeting with SENCOs took place the day before and three further meetings are scheduled to finalise the documentation. There are slight changes to the documentation in relation to wording. People who weren't able to attend the meeting have been asked to send comments back to feed into the final documentation. Documentation will be finalised at the end of the Autumn term.

3.22 MP asked if there were any further questions from the Forum that haven't been asked over the last two meetings so colleagues have the information to fully represent their school group.

3.23 JT enquired what consultation has taken place with parents, as the changes in the HNB will have a dramatic effect on the provision for their children. LA noted that consultation has not been part of the process, but looking at the budgetary constraints and the needs of the children in the framework. ZW stated that this a valid point as the minutes are public documents and parents will be concerned.

Agreed that a standardised approach will be required for all schools, should parents contact them enquiring regarding the changes.

3.24 MH stated that every parent would want to know that every avenue had been examined in relation to their child and their needs, and MH feels that everything hasn't been explored. MP objected to this, and gave his professional assurance that everything has been explored and a lot of work has taken place with schools to provide the best possible solution for Schools' Forum.

3.25 MT agreed that there would need to be a clear plan to communicate a common voice to parents, so that everyone is provided the same message in order to move forwards.

LA clarified that there isn't a plan in terms of contact with parents, and something can be agreed moving forwards. There is a Parent Carer Forum where this can be progressed. ZW noted, however, that this is only a small group and not representative of all children.

3.26 DS noted that the impact on parents will be different, depending on what they access, and each child's needs is different.

3.27 DS has come into the Schools' Forum discussions late in regarding to the High Needs Block, and has heard conversations in relation to reduction in provision and meeting the needs of children.

Whilst the local authority have provided a solution to the overspend of the High Needs Block going forwards, there has been no offer/proposal of how this can be attained otherwise. DS noted that she is hearing that people don't like the proposals, however, they are not providing different options to make the budget balance.

KS informed DS that at the last meeting he informed Schools' Forum of the PRU+ model that they are devising, and this has been shared with MP and Sally Robinson. If this model is adopted then this will bring certain children back to Hartlepool. TG stated that they were considering provision at St Hild's using Space 2 Learn.

TG noted that as the funding formula hasn't been finalised it is difficult to put a proposal forwards on an unknown budget. Whilst additional models may have been looked at to provide alternative proposals, these have never been brought to Schools' Forum to be discussed and discounted. Without this information do not know exactly what options have been looked at.

MT noted that there were a series of consultations, work has been undertaken with SENCOs, and the SENCO at school has not reported on a different better model.

- 3.28 MT questioned MFG funding and the need that this funding does need to happen, however, where will the money be coming from. SSh noted that this has been factored into the proposal presented to Schools' Forum in relation to the High Needs Block. Table referred to in 9.3 of the report presents the data.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Agree the principals and approach of the SEND Draft Guidance 2016 Funding Ranges framework, with the expectation that the final document, will be brought to a future Schools' Forum meeting for approval before Christmas.

For 17 (seventeen) Against 0 (nil) Abstentions 0 (nil)

- 4.2 Agree the funding range for the different bandings as in table 8.8 of the High Needs Block Review, taking into account that there are a small number of exceptionally vulnerable learners may need bespoke funding beyond the proposed ranges, and that these will be reviewed on an individual case basis.

For 5 (five) Against 7 (seven) Abstentions 5 (five)

- 4.3 SS noted as a point of clarity when discussed voting with the groups that she represents, she was of the understanding that Schools' Forum were voting on the SEND Guidance, and not on the bandings ranges. MP noted that he will report to Children's Services Committee that separate votes were taken.

- 4.4 Agree the transfer of £0.550m from the Schools Block to the HNB and commit to this transfer for a period of at least three years (para 8.10)

For 14 (fourteen) Against 0 (nil) Abstentions 3 (three)

- 4.5 Agree in principal of the local authority should refer a disapplication request to the Secretary of State to disapply the MFG regulations in respect of the Special Schools from 2021/22 (para 8.10)

For 0 (nil) Against 14 (Fourteen) Abstentions 3 (three)

5. Agenda items for next full Forum meeting

5.1 MP hoped that information will be received imminently in relation to the funding allocated. However, with this in mind proposed two meeting slots be held in the diaries for future Schools' Forum meetings.

Agreed the meeting dates:

Friday 6 October 2017 10am – 12 noon at CETL
 Tuesday 10 October 2017 9am – 11am at CETL

5.2 SSh noted that all schools will have to be consulted in relation to Schools Formula this year and this will need discussing at a future meeting.

5.3 JHe asked for an update on SEMH Group to be added to a future agenda.