**Report to Hartlepool Schools’ Forum 11 October 2019**

**Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning**

# Item 9 : High Needs Block – SEND Challenges

1. **Introduction**

1.1 This report outlines the journey that the authority and Schools’ Forum have taken with regard to funding of children with SEND in the context of increasing demand and continuing financial pressure.

1. **Background**

2.1 The local authority has faced financial pressure relating to high needs expenditure since 2015/16. The council, in partnership with Schools’ Forum, can demonstrate a proactive approach towards activities that ensure optimum efficiency in the use of limited resources, along with innovation in provision to avoid costly out of authority arrangements.

Despite introducing a numbers of mitigating actions, the financial pressure against the High Needs Block continues. A High Needs Outturn report was presented to Forum on 13 September 2019 setting out the potential end of year situation which indicated an overspend across a range of scenarios as below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scenario | Overspend |
| Worse case | £0.103m |
| Mid case | £0.318m |
| Best case | £0.845m |

2.2 This report sets out the current challenges facing the local area in relation to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It is intended that the information in this report is used to provide information on the current activities being undertaken to support the challenges and to provoke discussion on further solutions.

**3. Comparison between national and local picture**

3.1 Nationally the numbers of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) has increased for a third consecutive year representing **14.9%** of the total pupil population (January 2019). This includes SEN support and EHC plans. This is compared to a total Hartlepool equivalent SEN population of **16%.**

3.2 The % of children on SEN support nationally is **11.9%** with Hartlepool having **13.3%.**

3.3 The national percentage of pupils with an EHC plan has risen to **3.1%** of the total pupil population after remaining constant at 2.8% from 2007 to 2017.The local comparator is **2.7%** which is slightly lower than the national picture.

3.4 The comparison for needs for the whole SEN group are as follows

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Primary** | | **Secondary** | | **Special** | |
| **Need** | **Local %** | **National %** | **Local %** | **National %** | **Local %** | **National %** |
| Specific Learning Disability | 9 | 9.5 | 21.1 | 20.6 | 3.3 | 1.6 |
| Moderate Learning Disability | 22.1 | 20.9 | 23.9 | 22 | 28.5 | 12.8 |
| Severe Learning Disability | 0.4 | 0.6 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 20.5 | 21.6 |
| Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 7.1 | 6.9 |
| SEMH | 15 | 16.3 | 17.6 | 19.6 | 2.9 | 12.8 |
| SLCN | 34.6 | 30.6 | 11.3 | 11.5 | 11.3 | 7.3 |
| HI | 1.7 | 1.7 | 2 | 2.3 | 0.4 | 1.1 |
| VI | 0.7 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 0 | 0.7 |
| Multi-sensory | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0 | 0.3 |
| Physical Disability | 3.7 | 2.8 | 5.1 | 3.0 | 1.3 | 3.4 |
| ASD | 5.4 | 7.9 | 10.9 | 10.3 | 23.4 | 29.8 |

3.5 The information above offers comparison information with the national picture however this only offers an opportunity to ask further questions. Some of the questions that the above information leads to includes:

* Our % of children with EHC plans is lower than nationally however our SEN support is higher. Does this indicate that schools feel able to manage needs at a lower level indicating inclusion is in place? However this could also indicate that our schools are holding children too long at SEN support before moving to an EHC process.
* There is a significantly higher proportion of children with moderate learning difficulties in special than nationally. Does this mean that our mainstream schools struggle to meet the need so this group of pupils?
* We are currently seeing an increase in SEMH needs however the national % is even higher therefore should be expect this increase and planning for a further increase
* There are significantly less children with SEMH in special provision than nationally. This indicates that we have not commissioned the right provision. This is being addressed with the commissioning of the SEMH free school.

3.6 Additional local information shows that our EHC plans continue to increase with 14 cases having been presented to September panel for request to assess with 11 proceeding to assessment.

**4. Actions Taken to Date**

4.1 The financial strategy to bring levels of high needs expenditure to sustainable levels has included:

* restructured ranges for funding of high needs places facilitated by an external consultant
* implementation of two primary social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) Additional Resource Provisions during 2018-19 academic year at Rossmere and Springwell
* implementation of a secondary SEMH provision at high Tunstall during 2019-20 academic year
* successful submission of a free school bid to DfE around SEMH to reduce the need for costly Out of Authority provision
* Provision of increased places at our maintained primary special school.
* Establishment of a working group of headteachers, local authority officers and representatives from CAMHS to examine further ways to reduce the funding pressure on the HNB for children and young people with ( SEMH) issues
* A commitment to retaining Hartlepool children within the town through reasonable avoidance of Out of Authority arrangements.

**5. Task and Finish Group**

5.1 Schools’ Forum established a Task and Finish Group during 2019.

5.2 The Task and Finish Group was established to understand, analyse and challenge the direction of travel for each area of special needs expenditure, with a view to proposing areas for change.

5.3 The Group agreed 6 major areas to be explored. The outcome of the Task and Finish Group was reported to Schools’ Forum on the 21 June 2019 (report attached at appendix 1). The Group recommended 5 action points for implementation and these were agreed and assigned ownership by Schools’ Forum.

**6. Further Actions Underway to Reduce the HNB Financial Pressures**

6.1 A draft JSNA (Joint Assessment Needs Assessment) has been written. The intention is to understand current needs, projected needs and whether services/ provision are meeting needs and the gaps are. A joint commissioning strategy has been drafted and will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing at the beginning at December.

6.2 The new SEMH Free School is currently being commissioned with two bidders. The evaluation process will take place over the Autumn term with decisions being made on successful provider by Spring 2020. Expected opening 2021.

6.3 Primary SEMH ARPs are established at Rossmere Primary and Springwell Special School. Initial findings indicate that the SEMH panel process is working well, however there needs to be further work to understand whether the commissioning of the provision is effective. For example the current model is based on children spending short amounts of time in the SEMH ARP, however it has been clear within SEMH panel that there are some schools reluctant to reintegrate the children back into their schools. An independent review has been commissioned to understand whether the model is working, whether the model is the right one and what the challenges are.

6.4 The Secondary SEMH ARP will open in January 2020.

6.5 The instigation of a feasibility study at Catcote to understand needs and whether the current provision can meet these needs.

6.6 Colleagues are working with health to highlight children with additional needs from birth – this will allow for planning for provision particularly in relation to profound and multiple learning difficulty.

6.7 The trailblazer bid with Mental Health Support Teams supporting two clusters within Hartlepool was successful. This will support early intervention for children’s emotional wellbeing.

6.8 The SEMH group requested the Education Psychologist Team to consult with schools around graduated response and best practice. This information is currently being collated.

**7. Ongoing Challenges**

7.1 There are number of questions that need to be addressed:

* Is the graduated response working? Is the mainstream workforce equipped to manage current and emerging needs?
* Governance – where do we want these questions and solutions to be addressed? E.g. what is the role of the SEMH group – need to understand priorities and who is doing what.
* Information collated for the JSNA indicates that SLCN is increasing and there is a need to jointly with health review provision to meet these needs

**8. Recommendations**

8.1 Forum is recommended to:

1. note the contents of the report;
2. consider whether there are further solutions that we need to be exploring to support the challenges set out in this report