

Item 5: Outcomes from High Needs Task and Finish Group

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Schools' Forum agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group during the budget setting process for 2019/20.
- 1.2 The ongoing financial pressure on the High Needs block prompted a critical need to understand the current position on spending, particularly since the implementation of the new top-up ranges in 2018/19.
- 1.3 The 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.
- 1.4 This report outlines the information requested and reviewed by the Task and Finish Group, the key messages arising from the data analysis, along with a set of proposals for implementation.

2. Background

- 2.1 The group first met on 9 January 2019, agreeing that there were six major areas to be explored. Those areas being:
 - Structure of the High Needs Block (HNB) – understanding the constituent elements, identifying which elements are consistently growing/shrinking and what are the major influences causing this.
 - Understanding how funding is allocated to need in relation to the decision-making and authorisation processes that are in use.
 - Understanding the SEND elements of the census returns that schools must make. Taking time to consider whether, as a collective, we can be smarter to maximise income to the HNB.
 - Detailed review of out of area (OOA) and independent school placements and trends over the last 2/3 years by age of the student, phase of education and by the student's assessed identified need (for example, ASD, SEMH, HIVI). This could aid our understanding as to whether appropriate provision could be delivered within Hartlepool, or at least closer to the town.
 - Review of residential school placements to understand how such placements are funded with partners such as social care and health. Also to ensure that funding is re-charged to the appropriate partners.
 - Consideration of how Individual Pupil Support (IPS) agreements are made, including setting a budget limit, above which no new funding would be agreed in-year.
- 2.2 Over a number of meetings authority SEND and finance officers provided a series of data sets to the group exploring each of the identified areas as above. As discussion continued through each meeting, incrementally detailed information was made available to respond to

questions raised in discussion. A list of the information presented to the group is shown at appendix A for information.

- 2.3 Final data sets were made available in relation to the area that raised the most concern and presented a potentially significant opportunity for change – that of OOA and independent school placements. Enhanced information for the full cohort was provided. To aid understanding, a random sample of the cohort was taken.
- 2.4 Seven placements were selected at random, with detailed case studies presented to gain a greater depth of understanding about the profile of identified need and possible influences resulting in the education placement out of Hartlepool.

3. Key Messages from Data Analysis

HNB Funding

- 3.1 Over 40% of HNB funding (£4.7m for Hartlepool) comes through the historic spend factor. This is a flat rate factor so is not responsive to need or demand.
- 3.2 Within HNB funding, Hartlepool receives £4k per child recorded on the January Alternative Provision census (from independent schools) and per child recorded on the October school census within special schools. For 2019/20, this is 254 pupils at £4k per child – a total of £1.016m.

Case Studies Independent School Provision

- 3.3 From the data and case studies it was identified that the need for independent high cost school places was predominantly for secondary age students, with a larger number being identified at KS3.
- 3.4 From the overall cohort and the sample seven students, SEMH was identified as the overriding predominant need.
- 3.5 For all of the students identified in the deep dive case studies, each individual had social care and CAMHs involvement prior to placements being sought. For many, the involvements were ongoing.
- 3.6 The students and families had all been part of a co-ordinated multi-agency approach involving a myriad of services, including IRT, Early Help, YOS, Police, Probation and a number of voluntary sector organisations. Thus confirming that the students' needs were being addressed in a holistic manner.

Implication of Key Messages from the Data Analysis

- 3.7 The information reviewed by the group strongly confirmed the need for local SEMH provision. The importance of understanding and influencing both the role and remit of the new SEMH Free School was noted.

- 3.8 Linked to an understanding of the remit of the new SEMH Free School, the ongoing need for an agreed and consistent approach for management of SEN across all mainstream schools in the town was acknowledged by the group.
- 3.9 The information reviewed by the group demonstrated the volumes of SEN children entering independent school provision during, or soon after, the transition from primary to secondary school. Although the transition period is monitored and managed carefully, the group challenged whether further mitigation could be put in place.
- 4. Reducing Financial Pressure on the HNB - Proposals for Implementation**
- 4.1 Following careful analysis of the data provided, the task and finish group concluded that the greatest potential for easing the financial pressure on the HNB is to reduce spending against out of area and independent school provision.
- 4.2 Following careful analysis of the data provided, the task and finish group concluded that the key opportunity for savings was linked to any placements that can be feasibly managed within Hartlepool provision as opposed to out of area and independent school provision. It was acknowledged that this is not possible in a number of complex cases but also recognised that even a small number of placements could make a difference.
- 4.3 The group proposes the following five actions for implementation in order to realise savings:-
1. Where possible, local authority engagement with prospective delivery partners for the new free school around the findings from the task and finish group;
 2. Agree and implement a mechanism for sharing best practice across all schools to ensure an effective understanding of the knowledge, skills and expectation of mainstream staff, including access to effective training, to enhance the offer of support to meet the needs of students with SEMH based difficulties within the mainstream curriculum;
 3. Explore and implement extended and enhanced transition arrangements for this group of children especially at Y6 to Y7, including consideration of offering a primary model of teaching for an initial period of time;
 4. Document and implement a whole system approach to an inclusive ethos across the full school estate, driven by head teachers in Hartlepool to provide a consistent approach and level of skill amongst school based staff and understanding of need, with particular regard to Adverse Childhood Experiences and how such “toxic stress” reactions impact on the individuals development;
 5. Encourage training and CPD for other agencies, such as CAMHS, social workers and EPs in supporting schools to implement an effective approach to managing children with challenging behaviour.
- 4.4 In addition to financial savings, students accessing provision in Hartlepool would allow them to maintain existing friendships and maintain a sense of belonging in their own community and home town.
- 5. Reducing Financial Pressure on the HNB - Potential Financial Benefit**
- 5.1 The table below illustrates the difference in cost, and therefore potential financial opportunity, when comparing types of provision for an individual SEN pupil.

Provision Type	Cost of Provision
Mainstream provision in Hartlepool	AWPU + Notional SEN £6k + IPS top up funding at 5ii £6k = approx £16k
Specialist provision in Hartlepool	Place funding £10k + top up at 5ii £6k = £16k with potentially transport costs
Commissioned day placement in independent school provision	Place fees at approx £40k to £65k per year plus transport costs which can be in excess of £20k depending on distance travelled

6. **Recommendations**

Forum are asked:

- a) To consider the five proposals from the High Needs Task and Finish Group (listed at paragraph 4.3);
- b) To agree whether the five proposals should be implemented;
- c) Where proposals are agreed for implementation, assign ownership.

Appendix A: Listing of data provided to the Task and Finish Group

Meeting Date	Description of Information Provided
4 February 2019	Slide deck covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outline of the funding factors making up HNB funding; ➤ High needs expenditure by category and key activity; ➤ The direction of travel (whether expenditure categories are growing or shrinking)
25 February 2019	Slide deck covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clarification on HNB funding elements; ➤ Review of independent school fee expenditure across a range of categories; ➤ Review of out of area provision expenditure across a range of categories. <p>The categories of spend covered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Split of day versus residential provision 2. Split per year group 3. Split per category of need
12 March 2019	Listing of children placed in both independent school and out of area provision and still in provision at the current date. Information included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year provision started 2. Primary need 3. Annual cost 4. Authority child placed with (out of area only) <p>From this data, the group randomly selected 7 case studies.</p>