

Agenda Item 9 – Inclusion and High Needs Block Review

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to ask members to allocate funding to:
- Commission NDTi to support the implementation of the recommendations from the initial Inclusion review
 - Commission a SEND/ funding consultant (Peter Gray) to review the funding elements of the SEND system

2. National Development Team for Inclusion

2.1 In the spring term 2021 Schools Forum requested that an independent review of inclusion was carried out and NDTi were commissioned to undertake an initial review. This review was carried out in the Summer Term and presented to headteachers in September.

2.2 The report set out the following recommendations

- That stakeholders develop a vision for where they would like Hartlepool to be in term of inclusive education by 2026
- That SEND and inclusion are not seen as two different workstreams but that an inclusion strategy is developed once the vision is clear. The new inclusion strategy should include the current SEND strategy
- That there is a programme of training and development aimed at increasing an understanding of inclusive education
- Work with the parent carer forum to develop their statement further and for it to be central to a new inclusion strategy.
- A training strategy is developed which initially focuses on school leadership.
- As part of the High Needs Funding review a fresh look is given to how the IPS funding is allocated.
- There is a fresh look at how Education, Health and Care plans are developed and reviewed and to provide training across the system on person-centred planning.
- Hartlepool creates a school improvement/learning and behaviour support service (probably better described as an inclusion service). Which supports school leadership with their SEND and inclusion strategies and works in classrooms to develop skills and resources
- The mainstream resourced provision for social emotional and mental health needs be reviewed and that consideration be given to embedding support for behaviour in a new inclusion service.
- When considering the development of a learning and behaviour support service, priority is given to the early years and that there is at least on SEND early years specialist as part of the service.
- Preparing for Adulthood group is established with a view to reviewing the 14-25 curriculum for young people with SEND across Hartlepool to ensure that

young people's aspirations for employment, social inclusion, independent living, and good health are met.

- A young people's forum is established. The purpose of the forum would be to share their and other young people's experiences and aspirations with the local authority and their schools.

2.3 Headteacher representatives, parents and council officers recently met to look at how to implement the above recommendations. There was a shared agreement that it would be best for external facilitators to support the development of the vision and strategy. It was felt that the best approach would be to commission NDTi to continue to support the area.

2.4 NDTi have completed a proposal to support Hartlepool which is for 20 days at a cost of £20k.

2.5 Schools Forum are asked to approve the further commissioning of NDTi at a cost of £20k from the High Needs Block reserve. This will enable the implementation of the recommendations using an external facilitator.

3. Funding for SEND

3.1 Schools Forum requested a review of the HNB which started in April 2021. Initial exploratory work was undertaken which highlighted a number of areas that needed consideration. An update was presented to Schools Forum in September 2021. Schools Forum agreed for the HNB review to be paused whilst the NDTi work was undertaken. In the meantime, as mentioned earlier, a group of schools, parents and council officers met to discuss next steps in relation to the NDTi review. The consensus from the group was that the review of funding must take place alongside the inclusion review as the funding should be supporting the vision and strategy for inclusion.

3.2 Officers asked NDTi for examples of best practice re: funding approach for inclusion and they introduced Peter Gray who had previously worked in Nottinghamshire as Assistant Director. An inclusive funding approach was implemented in Nottinghamshire which is still in place. Subsequently Peter has supported numerous LAs and the DfE to review SEND funding arrangements to support inclusion. Officers met with Peter and he agreed that he would be happy to support Hartlepool to review how SEND provision and support is funded.

3.3 The review would include all aspects of SEND funding including notional SEND funding. It would include interviews with all stakeholders, visiting of provision, review of current funding arrangements and make recommendations on the use of SEND funding to support inclusion.

3.4 Schools Forum are asked to approve the commissioning of Peter Gray to undertake a review of our funding approach and make recommendation of the way that the HNB is used to support inclusion. This will be approximately 20 days and cost £13k and will be funded from the HNB reserve.

4. High Needs Block Reserves

4.1 The current High Needs Block reserve balance is £0.721m. Should Schools' Forum agree the recommendations above, the reserve balance would reduce to £0.688m.

This balance is prior to funding any overspend against the High Needs Block in 2021/22, currently estimated at £0.292m.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Schools Forum are asked to approve the further commissioning of NDTi at a cost of £20k from the High Needs Block reserve. This will enable the implementation of the recommendations.
- 5.2 Schools Forum are asked to approve the commissioning of Peter Gray at an approximate cost of £13k (dependent on travel costs) to undertake a review of our funding approach and make recommendations on the use of the HNB in order to promote inclusion.