

Cumbria Schools' Forum – SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group

Notes of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on Thursday 24 February 2005 at The Rheged Discovery Centre, Penrith.

Present: Mr A Abernethy (Carlisle Secondary), Mr S Bowditch (Special Schools), Mr C Brooksbank (Foundation Primary), Mrs S Fearn (representing Mr B Thomas), Ms S Gaston-Parry (Copeland Secondary), Mr P Shaw (Allerdale Secondary and Chair of the Group), Mr M Woodburn (South Lakeland Primary), Mr D Johnston (LEA), Mr D Henderson (LEA), Mrs N Shiels (LEA) and Miss C Smith (LEA Observer)

Apologies: Mr M Hrynkow, Mrs T Macur (representing Mr A Bryant, Cumbria Governors Council), Mr A Rutter, Mr M Yearsley

1. Notes of the Meeting held on 8 December 2004

The notes of the meeting held on 8 December 2004 were agreed as an accurate record of the discussions that took place. However, at the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on 14 January 2005 there was a further discussion related to the notes of the meeting held on 8 December 2004. The SEN Working Group agreed that the minute of the Schools' Forum should be added to the notes of 8 December 2004 in order to have an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

Any matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Strategic Facilities Funding

At the meeting of the group held on 8 December 2004 a report asking the group to note a proposed allocation for strategic facilities, including an additional £150,000 had been considered. In discussing the report concern had been expressed that the proposal was moving away from equity. It had therefore been agreed that the item should be considered further at the next meeting of the group and that an appropriate officer should be invited to attend the meeting to explain the proposal and deal with any queries.

David Henderson, Access and Inclusion, explained that the proposal had been an initial attempt to allocate the additional £150,000 to the Strategic Facilities. He also explained that discussions had highlighted problems faced by those schools hosting Strategic Facilities. There had been an expectation that Strategic Facilities should be cost neutral but it appeared that there was a mismatch of expectation. Each Strategic Facility received a lump sum that was intended to fund the increased costs however it was now apparent that the lump sum was insufficient to meet the costs. In order to try to address the mismatch in a fair and

Action

equitable way there had been discussions that had informed this initial proposal. Those discussions had recognised that special schools had an enhanced AWPU and that Strategic Facilities also provided something special, and different. The amounts proposed in the paper were different depending on the age ranges and this had been a deliberate attempt to recognise the different needs of the differing age ranges whilst linking to the differing AWPU levels.

During the discussion a number of points were made, including:

- inclusion was expensive and there was an emerging theme relating to the real cost and also the hidden cost of inclusion
- why the differing amounts? The apparent mismatch of funding tended to have a greater effect on the smaller Strategic Facilities, therefore the differing amounts did reflect some economies of scale
- the proposals in the report appeared to represent a change in the basis of the philosophy – wherever a child attended the same amount of funding would be available to address the needs of the child
- the growing concerns about problems associated with the social inclusion population and related inadequate funding
- it was recognised that Special Schools and the Strategic Facilities needed to work more closely. The special schools representative did suggest some joint working to address training needs

The greatest concern of the group was that of the different amounts for the different age ranges. It was suggested that if the size of the Strategic Facilities was a major factor then should this not be taken into account when attempting to determine how the sum was allocated.

The SEN Working Group therefore requested that some further work be undertaken on the calculation of the additional allocation. A further report that included re-worked figures and more detail regarding any proposals to be presented to the next meeting of the SEN Working Group.

Post 16 – The Chair reported that issues relating to funding of statements for post 16 students continued to be unresolved. This was a national issue however it was recognised that there had been a lot of support locally from LSC and LEA officers to seek a resolution. DH suggested that the head of Ullswater Community College might be able to provide an update on the situation.

4. **SEN Funding Issues**

At the meeting of the group held on 8 December 2004 a letter that dealt with issues specific to pupils of school leaving age had been circulated and advice sought from the group as to the best way to progress. The group had agreed that the item should be considered at its next meeting and that the letter should be copied to all secondary heads.

DH

PS to contact
SG, UCC

The SEN Working Group therefore considered a paper that asked the Schools' Forum to consider supporting the SEN Service in its wish to cease to maintain a year 11 pupil's statement of special educational need on 30 June. It was felt that this would enable limited resources to be targeted more effectively on other special educational needs and create an annual saving of approximately £100k per area team or £300k across the county. The resource could then be targeted to the LEA's provision of non-statutory support to schools and pupils. Such a change would also establish a standard of practice across all areas.

Whilst the group accepted that there should be consistency, they were concerned that funding would 'disappear'. Several members of the group explained how SEN staff were deployed elsewhere in the event that the pupils that they usually worked with had left school. The continued funding allowed schools the flexibility to prepare for the next academic year or to engage staff on other equally important tasks. It was explained that the proposal was aimed only at those Yr 11 pupils that did actually leave school so it would/would not? affect the special schools.

As a result of their discussions, the SEN Working Group agreed to recommend that the status quo be maintained and that schools continue to receive funding for a Yr 11 pupil's statement of special educational needs until 31 August.

5. **Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant**

At the meeting on 7 October 2004 the sub-group had agreed to recommend to the Forum that the LEA continue to retain the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant centrally but that some evaluation of how the grant was spent be established. The Schools' Forum, at its meeting on 17 November 2004 had asked that any evaluation of the grant be initially considered by the SEN Working Group. A report that evaluated the utilisation of the Ethnic Minority Grant was therefore presented to the sub-group. The group did not however feel that the information presented was that which they had requested. As a result, the group had requested that a further report providing information about the quality assurance mechanisms that were in place to monitor outcomes be presented to the next meeting.

A further report was introduced. In general, the group recognised that there was a great deal of good work being undertaken and it was felt that something would be lost if the funding was taken away. There remained, however, a number of queries relating to the funding and the overall aims.

It was therefore agreed that Bob White or Angela Gibson should be invited to attend the next meeting of the group to give a short presentation and answer questions that the group might have. The SEN Working Group did stress that they were not challenging the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant but that they

wanted to be better informed, for example, were there other funding sources and if so how did they fit together?

NS

6. **Any Other Business**

The Chair reported that it appeared that the CASH A+I Group were having very similar discussions to this group. He sought advice from the group about how the two groups could communicate and feed into one another. Previously, the Carlisle Secondary representative of the Schools' Forum had also been a member of the CASH A+I group but this was no longer the case. There was some discussion about the remit of the two groups and how they could compliment each other. It was also pointed out that PHA also had an A+I group and that they too had similar discussions.

As a starting point, the Chair suggested that each group should circulate their notes of meetings to the other groups. The minutes of the Schools' Forum were already circulated widely. Also, when setting the agenda for the SEN working Group meetings, CASH and PHA would be asked if they had any specific items for inclusion. NS confirmed that Gordon Weallens, PHA Support Officer was already copied into all e-mails to members of the School's Forum and the sub-groups. It was agreed that Arthur Capstick, CASH Support Officer should also be added to all distribution lists. The Chair of the group agreed to report back to CASH that the SEN Working Group were happy to link in the way outlined above.

PS, NS

7. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Group should meet again on Thursday, 14 April 2005 at 9.30am. The venue would be confirmed.

P&R/NJS
7 March 2005