

CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS FORUM – SEN, SOCIAL DEPRIVATION, ACCESS AND INCLUSION WORKING GROUP

Notes of the meeting of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on Tuesday, 6 February 2007 at Newton Rigg, Penrith.

Present: Jane Blacklock (Small Schools), Steven Bowditch (Special Schools), Chris Brooksbank (South Lakeland Primary and Chair of Group), Stephanie Fearn (CE Diocese), Janet Mansfield (Community Secondary), Keith Little (CCC Labour Group), Eugene Tumelty (VA Secondary), Anton Hodge (LA), Ashleigh Sutton (LA) and Nicola Shiels (LA).

Apologies: Mrs N Bates, Ms J Richardson, Mr C Peale

1. Notes of the Meeting held on 10 January 2007

Subject to two amendments to page three, the notes of the meeting of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on 10 January 2007 were agreed.

2. Matters Arising

It was reported that the last meeting of the PHA A+I Group had been cancelled and it was not clear whether this group (and the CASH A+I Group) would continue to meet. Individual members of the SEN group expressed their concern at the possible loss of these two groups. It was suggested that the CASH and PHA groups could link with the Schools' Forum SEN Group however, this could be problematic in that the Schools' Forum and working groups were constrained to financial issues.

It was agreed that the future of these groups should be raised at the next full Schools' Forum meeting.

The group were disappointed that a representative from SEN had not been available to join the meeting.

4. Review of Funding for Social Deprivation and Personalised Learning

At the meeting of the group held on 10 January there had been a presentation that set out methods of distributing funding for social deprivation and personalisation other than using free schools meals, the method currently used in Cumbria.

Based on the previous presentation together with more detailed information circulated at the meeting, the group began to consider whether there was a better, more efficient method of allocation.

It was noted that, if the method of allocation did change, it was important that the new method was reliable.

This was a small part of the overall review of the formula that was being undertaken by the School Budgets Working Group. The first target in the timetable was, at present, 2 May 2007. At that point the Schools Forum would be asked to agree a model, or number of

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models, that schools would be consulted about.

The School Budgets Working Group had requested further information on two models:

- Activity Based
- To look at elements that should not be included in the AWPU eg. lump sum element and what could be included in the lump sum.

Funding of SEN, social deprivation and personalisation was one such element.

Social Deprivation/Personalised Learning

There was an expectation by the DfES that LAs would use a percentage of DSG to fund deprivation and the expected level was set out as 8.1%. In Cumbria the percentage was 4.5%, or 5.6% if meals were included.

LAs were required to have a deprivation factor and in the late 1990s it had been agreed that, in Cumbria, this factor would be 1.5%. This had since increased to 1.7% due to the inclusion of personalisation. 1.7% was generally higher than other local authorities.

The special schools representative stated that the special schools had not received personalised learning funding. It was confirmed that from 1 April 2007 the special schools would receive this funding, as the primary and secondary schools did.

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Personalisation

DfES believed that the attainment gap was too big. Research had been undertaken that illustrated that pupils from deprived backgrounds did less well than their peers. In Cumbria the attainment gap at KS2 was following the national pattern though it was not quite as big. Boys also tended to do less well than girls of a similar age.

DfES figures suggested that Cumbria under allocated in this area. It was reported that a small number of LAs were allocating close to the target amount but most actually allocated less (than Cumbria).

The group discussed other specific funding that was available in certain parts of the county such as Barrow and the west – how much difference did that additional funding make?

Modelling the Formula

- Changing the split
- Other methods of distribution
- The FSM issue

Additional papers were circulated at the meeting that illustrated how the funding was currently distributed. Guidance from DfES was based on reasoning that every child must receive some funding.

The group discussed the current method of allocating the funding and possible ways to redistribute by changing the percentage splits.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- There should be some degree of stability

- Look at each key stage and what impact the funding actually made
- Which pupils were actually being targeted?
- Problems relating to the use of FSM
- Other indexes could also be problematic

FSM/IMD

FSM could be used across all the key stages except nursery. There were concerns about the process of applying for free schools meals as well as the perceived 'stigma' in some areas of the county. There was some discussion around the notion of the LA encouraging and helping people to take up their entitlement.

A number of other LAs used IMD or IMD in conjunction with FSM. However, the group did not feel that they had sufficient informed information available to move forward.

In order to progress, the following actions were identified:

- To write to other authorities using IMD requesting information about the process, experience, etc with a copy to the local School Forum asking for similar feedback.
- Further modelling based on IMD rather than FSM to be undertaken.
- Individual group members to try to make contact with a school in one of the other LAs using IMD to discuss their experiences. Issues to consider – the impact on schools, how did the LA move to the new system?

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5. Date of Next Meetings

6 March 2007 – Feedback on progress made following meeting on 6 February 2007.

23 March 2007 – To invite the five Special School Heads and the Head of a secondary school strategic facility (UCC). Representative from SEN to attend.

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6. Any Other Business

Provision Mapping – There were concerns regarding a letter that had been issued to schools regarding SEN funding. The Chair of the School Budgets Group had responded to the letter, a copy of that response would be forwarded to the Chair of the SEN group who would endorse or add his own comments to the response.

P&R/NJS
February 2007