

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, 17 April 2007 in the Lonsdale Building, The Courts, Carlisle.

Present: Martin Alloway (Head, Sandside Lodge School), Jane Blacklock (Small Schools), Tess Brennan (Ullswater Community College), Chris Brooksbank (South Lakeland Primary and Chair of Group), Stephanie Fearn (CE Diocese), Bernard Gummatt (Head, George Hastwell School), Janet Mansfield (Community Secondary), Keith Little (CCC Labour Group), Alan Rutter (Teachers' Associations and Chair of the Forum), Anton Hodge (LA), Ashleigh Sutton (LA), Ann Henderson (LA) and Nicola Shiels (LA).

Apologies: Mrs N Bates, Mr S Bowditch, Ms J Richardson, Mrs S Leathers, Mr E Tumelty

The group agreed that item 4 on the agenda would be dealt with first. It was also reported that the Special School Representative had requested that the meeting be cancelled due to the short period of notice that had been given before the meeting.

1. The Funding of SEN in Cumbria

The Schools Forum was in the process of reviewing the funding formula for schools with a view to implementing in April 2008. The main work was being undertaken by the School Budgets Working Group but the SEN Working Group had been asked to consider the SEN, social deprivation and personalisation elements separately.

The personalisation agenda was driven by the government who were trying to target deprived areas to improve attainment. Schools had also expressed a number of concerns about SEN funding, funding of special schools, the current method of allocation and funding for strategically resourced schools. It was felt appropriate to consider these concerns as part of the review and, if possible, to make proposals for change.

Representatives from special schools and strategically resourced schools had been invited to join the meeting to contribute to a discussion on current funding arrangements for SEN in Cumbria. The group were asked for their views on how this would contribute to the wider formula review that was being undertaken.

Currently, funding for all types of schools was pupil based. The advantages and disadvantages of pupil led and place led funding were discussed. Place led funding allowed stability of funding but also funded empty places. The group discussed the different methods of funding SEN.

There was a concern about the inconsistency of funding for the strategically resourced schools. Provision was linked to need but

how need was proven was a separate issue. Pupils from different types of schools could be placed in a strategically resourced schools but the resource was dependent upon how the statement had been written. Some pupils may not need as high a resource but some may need much more.

The Strategic Facility Group had worked for some time to agree and produce a criteria on which funding could be based. However, circumstances had recently changed and the LA now had to direct the pupil to a particular school. Colleagues that were involved in these discussions reported that this recent change had resulted in a loss of confidence.

The representatives from the special schools explained how their schools were funded. Special schools were funded according to three bandings whereas for the strategically resourced schools there were many bandings. Spreadsheets that illustrated the differing levels of funding the special schools and the strategically resourced schools were circulated.

It was reported that the bandings used for strategically resourced schools were being reviewed. When this work was completed a report would be presented to the SEN Working Group.

D Hend/
A Hend

A further issue regarding curriculum provision was discussed. Special schools had to provide a curriculum for all their children, irrespective of need. The strategically resourced schools already provided the curriculum so perhaps the issue was one of access.

The group agreed that the discussions had highlighted that there was an overall lack of understanding about the different methods of funding and that there was some inconsistency in the statementing process. It was important that, in future, colleagues understood the method of funding.

Behaviour was also noted as a major concern with regard to funding.

There was, however, a general view that the favoured approach to funding was pupil led. Over the last 10 years most LAs had moved to place led and Cumbria was the only remaining LA that had pupil led funding. What was different in Cumbria? There was an impression, in other LAs, that what Cumbria did was good, Cumbria had been identified as a hub of good practice in the NW and was in the top ten LAs in the country.

Ann Henderson would contact the other NW colleagues and gather information about why they had moved away from pupil led funding and what benefits had been seen. The responses received would be reported back to the SEN Working Group.

A Hend

As part of the process it was important to consider whether the right funds were being allocated to schools – some quite large elements were held centrally eg. specialist teaching service, behaviour intervention team, etc. These could be delegated to individual schools. If these were delegated the expertise that was available could, however, be lost.

2. Notes of the Meeting held on 6 March 2007

The notes of the meeting of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on 6 March 2007 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Social Deprivation Funds – Method of Allocating

A report that summarised the current method of allocating social deprivation funding to schools, and explained alternative criteria for the distribution of the funding was presented.

The current method of allocating funding to schools to support social deprivation was based on an amount per free school meal. It had, however, been acknowledged that using FSM as a measure of social deprivation could be misleading. The SEN Working Group had been asked to look at alternative methods of distributing funding for social deprivation: -

- FSM – Free School Meals
- IMD – Index of Multiple Deprivation
- IDAC – Income Deprivation Affecting Children

The report provided a brief description of each method and gave an illustration of the levels of funding that schools would receive using the different factors.

The group were concerned about the shift in resources and the potential turbulence that may result. It was, however, noted that this was a small element of the overall budget and it was suggested that it would be more beneficial to see the effect on the overall budget.

There was a view that using FSM did not properly reflect the needs of rural and secondary schools and that using IMD or IDAC may be more accurate. There were some concerns about the IMD and IDAC data – it was based on information collected by the last census so was likely to be out of date. Using IMD or IDAC would also potentially move funding away from some of the most deprived areas of the county.

It was, therefore agreed that further information should be provided before the group could determine whether the current distribution method, based on FSM, should be maintained or whether future allocations should be based on IMD or IDAC.

AH/AS

5. Date of Next Meetings

The next meeting of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group would be held on Tuesday, 15 May 2007 at Newton Rigg, Penrith. The meeting would begin at 9.30am.

6. **Any Other Business**

Provision Mapping – There were ongoing issues regarding provision mapping. A number of representations had been made through TACG. Representatives from TACG had met with Ann Henderson and had agreed to establish a group to take this forward. It would be useful if a representative of the Schools Forum and a SENCO could become involved in the process.

A further letter of clarification would be issued to schools.

P&R/NJS
April 2007