

CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS' FORUM SEN SOCIAL DEPRIVATION ACCESS AND INCLUSION WORKING GROUP

DRAFT Notes of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on 13 December 2018, Conference Room A, Cumbria House, 9.30am

Present: Nick Hepburn-Fish (West Primary), Lisa Hollywood (Special Schools - representing Kris Williams), Jonathan Logan (PRUs), Chris McAree (North Secondary Academy), Angela O'Connell (Carlisle College), Duncan Priestley (North Primary), Sue Sanderson (Cabinet Member – Schools and Learning), Alan Rutter (Teachers Professional Associations), Louise Saunders (Beacon Hill School), Ruth Webster (South Primary) Dan Barton (LA), Mary Mulligan (LA), Susan Milburn (LA), Amanda Chew (LA), Nicola Shiels (LA)

Apologies: Lisa Balderstone, Margaret Embury, Steven Holmes, Cathy Styles, Kris Williams

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Notes of the Meeting held on 17 November 2017

Subject to some minor amendments, the notes of the meeting held on 17 November 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

There were no other matters arising from the notes of the previous meeting.

3. High Needs Funding and Budget Pressures

The High Needs block position had been reported at the meeting of the Schools Forum held in October, a briefing note had been circulated that provided a summary of the current position.

The projected DSG balance on the High Needs Block as at 31 March 2019 was £7.141m, this was made up of a deficit brought forward from 2017-18 (£4.840m) and an in-year overspend (£2.301m). As set out in the paper presented at the October meeting of the Forum, this represented an overspend of £4.582m against the planned DSG for the end of 2018-19.

The key variances were related to demand pressures on budgets eg. spending on EHCPs, residential and independent placements, etc.

Since 2018-18 high needs funding had been allocated through a National Funding Formula (NFF). The briefing paper provided a breakdown that illustrated how funding for High Needs was allocated through the NFF.

There were two main factors that had contributed to the significant pressures on the High Needs Block budget – funding and the rise in SEND demand:

- For each pupil in special and independent schools, the LA received £4,000 per pupil through the formula. DfE, however, required that the cost of funding of a special school place was £10,000 and the average cost of an independent placement was between £47,000-£50,000.

- The LA funded the cost of educating permanently excluded pupils. The maximum funding the LA was allowed to clawback from mainstream schools was £4,852 (primary), £7,583 (KS3) and £8,106 (KS4) on a pro rata basis.
- The historic spend factor secured 50% of local authority's 'planned spend' in 2017-18 in cash terms. This did not reflect any increases in population or rise in SEND.
- 50% of the proxy factors are distributed on a population aged 2-18 which did not reflect the different types of SEND or take account of the extension of duty to support students with SEN up to the age of 25.

The demand pressure arising from the increasing number of EHCPs was illustrated in two charts. Since 2011 there had been a rising trend in the number and proportion of pupils with EHCPs and statements; this trend was continuing with a significant growth in the number of pupils with an EHCP since January 2018. It was also noted that Cumbria had a much higher proportion of pupils with an EHCP in mainstream schools than there are nationally.

The issues that had been described were impacting on all LAs and it was suggested that it would be useful to look at what was being done in other areas to address similar issues. It was, however, noted that in other areas, the issues related to how funding was received from central government, and that LAs were working with a finite pot of money, meant that it was proving difficult to find solutions. A cross party parliamentary committee was being developed that would have a specific focus on SEND.

It was unlikely that any additional funding would be forthcoming until the next comprehensive spending review, the timing of which was getting pushed further back and may not take place until next November. However, groups from all areas, including parents of children with EHCPs were continuing to work very hard to lobby government.

It was clear that funding would not increase in the next few years, but how prepared was the LA? How much information was available about the children coming through in the future – needs, difficulties, numbers?

Information was available on needs that had already been identified, for example, conditions that children are born with such as the increase in the number of children born with a visual impairment, however, SEMH and autism issues tended not to be identified until later into a child's school career.

It was important that there was an emphasis on early intervention – the Children's Trust, Health – development of family hubs/family interventions, recruitment of more doctors in paediatrics who will work into mental health (for adults and children). Early help could also be beneficial in reducing the level of PEX and could offset the need for later interventions. Feel everyone is working together and towards the same ends.

Cumbria and schools across Cumbria were doing a good job and were committed to inclusion and the increase in number of EHCPs didn't mean that the system was failing but it was suffering because of pressures on funding. In Cumbria children with EHCPs were doing better than those in other parts of the country, there were fewer out of county placements and there were fewer NEET than in other areas. The group was reminded that the LA and colleagues in schools across the county were delivering a lot

of good work within the funding that was available and that by sharing best practice, the best value for money could be achieved.

4. DSG Deficit Consultation

Currently, DfE monitored those LAs that had a deficit greater than 2% of gross DSG. It was reported that DfE was proposing to reduce this to 1% and the expectation was that any LA that had a deficit greater than 1% of gross DSG would be required to produce a three year recovery plan.

This proposal had been subject to consultation and a response had been submitted highlighting that this was a situation that had developed over a number of years and that the LA had already delivered a recovery plan. Other local authorities were responding in a similar manner.

Nationally, many other LAs were reporting a deficit position but there was a view that Cumbria was actually further ahead than other LAs in terms of identifying ways to address the situation.

5. Alternative Provision Programmes

The group was provided with an update on the ongoing work in relation to alternative provision across the county.

Work was progressing in Barrow and South Carlisle with the outline business case having been approved for both areas. The timeline had been developed with the intention of both provisions being delivered by 2020. Existing accommodation in Barrow and Carlisle would be remodelled to create AP centres offering a mix of school commissioned places and provision for SEMH, similar to the model that was operated at Richmond House.

It was also reported that a paper, 'A Model for Alternative Provision – AP in Schools', had recently been circulated to all schools. Although it was very close to the Christmas break it had been felt important for the paper to be issued so as not to lose more time in the development of the proposals. Schools had been invited to express an interest at a high level which would help officers to identify where possible surpluses or deficits of provision might arise. Plans were in place to work towards a start date of September 2019 and some schools had already submitted responses.

There was some discussion as to whether there would be any work undertaken on transition – it was noted that youngsters moving to the college in Carlisle could struggle with the move from provision that was very small to a much bigger provision. Discussions were ongoing regarding the 14-16 offer in colleges and it was hoped that the development of AP in schools would go some way to help with the transition from schools to larger establishments.

6. High Needs Recovery Plan – Progress

There was a verbal update on progress with the high needs recovery plan. It was reported that planning had begun to address the main issues. Work was ongoing with the level of DSG expected in the next week which would also need to be taken into account. A number of the proposed plans would require initial expenditure which would need to be embedded before reductions in expenditure would begin to be seen. The

intention was to aim to bring youngsters back into the county but any changes would have to have a positive outcome for those youngsters.

In terms of the contributions from health, this involved two pieces of work – the historical clawback of costs and also to develop new ways of working. This work involved negotiations with two CCGs; the LA had a good relationship with North Cumbria whilst the relationship with Morecambe Bay was developing.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Schools Forum SEN Working Group would be advised when dates for meetings to be held during 2019 had been agreed. The meeting would begin at 12.00.

8. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

SAA/NS

January 2019