



# Northumberland County Council

## Wellbeing and Community Health Services Group

Education and Skills Service

Meeting: High Needs Sub Committee of the Schools Forum  
Date: Wednesday 10 March 2021  
Time: 9.30am  
Venue: Virtual Teams Meeting

<p><b>Present:</b>  <b>Sue Aviston</b> Head of Schools Organisation and Resources  <b>Sam Barron</b> Head of SEND Strategies  <b>Keith Faulkner</b> Vice Chair and Governor at Collingwood  <b>Andrea Mead</b> Headteacher Hillcrest  <b>Bruce Parvin</b> Education &amp; Skills Business Manager  <b>Colin Pearson</b> Trust Director, 3 Rivers Trust</p>	<p><b>David Street</b> Deputy Director of Education  <b>Nicola Taylor</b> Head of Inclusive Education Services  <b>Sara Wild</b> Headteacher – NCEA Castle Special School  <b>Graham Wilkins</b> Chair and Governor at St Wilfrid’s RC Primary School  <b>Deborah Wylie</b> Headteacher – Cramlington Village Primary School</p>
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Notes Lisa Headington

<b>Start time:</b>		<b>Action:</b>
1.	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	
2.	<b>In Attendance</b>  See above	
3.	<b>Apologies:</b>  Suzanne Connolly and Emma Miller.	
4.	<b>Declaration of personal or pecuniary Interest in any agenda item.</b>  No declaration of pecuniary interest declared by members other than AM and SW who benefit from the High Needs on a daily basis for their funding.  BP agreed and commented as do mainstream schools but the point was duly noted.	
5.	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting/Matters arising from Previous Minutes:</b>  <b>Page 1, .4</b> Terms of Reference – SA confirmed she had taken CP’s comments forward to the Director about the purpose of the HN Committee and has sent confirmation direct to CP and confirms the remit of the group is to stay as it is. As an authority we are looking to set up a Education Improvement Board and there will be an opportunity to look at the wider strategy and this is why this group is being set up. The groups under Schools Forum are very much focused on funding but will be looking at	

	<p>getting a representative from Schools Forum onto the Education Improvement Board which is currently being established.</p> <p>.5 Membership update, BP confirmed we would consider anyone that is interested in terms of representing the schools. We asked at the beginning of the September term and haven't had any further expressions of interest since AM and SW joined .</p> <p>With Marianne stepping down it was suggested that we may send another appeal out in the summer term to see if we have any more interest.</p> <p><b>Page 3, 8.</b> Bruce confirmed the action to ESFA presentation videos that he will need to check if available and share with members if possible.</p> <p>Minutes were reported to Schools Forum also.</p> <p>All agree the minutes as a true record by those present at the last meeting.</p>	
6.	<p><b>NORTHUMBERLAND DRAFT SEND STRATEGY CONSULTATION</b></p> <p>SB updated members about the Draft SEND Strategy Consultation which is going to be the Strategy for the next three years.</p> <p>It has been informed by the voice of children and young people particularly for the COVID survey which happened last summer.</p> <p>It has some basic principles that underpinned the recommendations in there and they are around having the child in the centre of processes, focusing on improving outcomes whether they are educational, health, or social care outcomes.</p> <p>The broad areas are, working together, early identification and inclusive education provision as well as preparation for adulthood.</p> <p>Actions gathered around 4 key priorities:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working together - strengthening our coproduction, around our local offer, it is about our joint commissioning and its about how services across education and health and social care effectively work together</li> <li>2. Providing the right support at the right time - STAR funding is in there and to look at how we can provide support to inclusive practices to support the graduated approach</li> <li>3. Review of our short breaks which is being undertaken and looking specialist capacity. From an inclusive education point of view it is around raising attainment for children and young people with SEND and also around developing a inclusion charter which is something that is being explored at the parent/carer forum coming out to schools for he consultation.</li> <li>4. Preparation for adulthood - we know that some children find it difficult leaving school and becoming an adult and it is how we better wrap around our services and support around the young</li> </ol>	

	<p>person to support them into adulthood. Part of this is looking at our education pathways to employment and apprenticeships and looking at how we support children and young people to become independent or as independent as possible.</p> <p>Out for consultation until 19th March 2021. We have a number of people using the online link and have had quite a lot of schools and partners emailing with comments which are being centrally collated.</p> <p>All feedback is welcomed. SB was requested to report back to members at the next HN meeting on the 12th May 2021.</p> <p>KF raised queries in relation to the lack of any references to Ofsted, the breakdown of the EHC population and the source of the images used.</p> <p>SB thanked KF for his comments and confirmed in terms of the photographs they are stock photographs that are shared and are looking at whether we can strengthen this and see if we can have photographs from local children and young people.</p> <p>BP confirmed around the numbers referred to page 8 of the document, the numbers do not add up to 100% simply because they do not represent 100% of the Northumberland children and young people with EHCP's. There are a number that are at pre-school provision and also a number of Post 16 students which will account for the difference in numbers.</p> <p>DW commented how visually appealing and accessible the document is and helpful for the families to understand the content. DW also flagged up about the photographs used for the document that it is great to see great quality visual but requested whether could have some mainstream as well as specialist provision reflected.</p> <p>DW asked about the early years position in terms of the funding and what umbrella that comes under as it is treated separately and couldn't easily see in terms of what specifics we have in terms of early years and noted it is referenced a little in pre-school education on the high needs budget. Not sure if there is an alignment. DW also queried about the Ofsted agenda and did not know if it would be of value to have something in that to raise the profile of that. DW thanked SB for the document.</p> <p>CP commented positively on the document and asked what the links would be between the governance structure at the end of SB's document and this new educational board.</p> <p>DS confirmed the Northumberland Educational Strategy Board is new so once running with it, it will be represented across all education areas.</p> <p>SB confirmed there will be undertaking a review of our governance to ensure it is providing enough challenge and assurance around progress being made.</p>	<p>SB</p>
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	<p>SW commented that she liked the presentation and will provide a written response. SW queried a point about section 5 SEND localities areas, SB confirmed that this is actually an error and this will subsequently be corrected</p> <p>SW also asked about the needs for children who were being educated “out of county” or in the independent and non-maintained sector.</p> <p>SB confirmed helpful point and will look at in the light of the strategy there is so much you can put in there but needs to be readable and accessible and having the key points.</p> <p>In support of SB, SA commented the overall document is around the strategy and the future vision, similar to the School Organisation Plan. This is updated on an annual basis .</p> <p>GW requested a copy for members of the committee for information. This would be shared with members.</p> <p>AM commented about the images and suggested that children with hidden disabilities also needed to be represented. SB confirmed this would be considered to ensure appropriate representation as would the balance of boys and girls images as well and ages so will take on board. Agreed that it is important that the document is reflective of the whole SEN population</p> <p>The document was positively received and all were encouraged to submit comments.</p>	<p>SW</p> <p>LH</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>ESFA HN FORMULA CONSULTATION</b></p> <p>BP presented a presentation to members about the Review of National Funding Formula for High Needs Allocations and asked members to consider the overview.</p> <p>February 2021 consultation is stage 1 of a 3 part process</p> <p>The consultation is looking at short term potential improvements to the formula for 2022/23 and 2021/22 is now settled. Looking essentially at the next funding year available.</p> <p>This will be influenced by the wider SEND review which the DFE concedes hasn't proceeded quite as quickly as would due to COVID, anticipating a draft consultation this spring/summer and there will subsequently be further consultation on changes of high needs funding stemming from the SEND review and findings relating to that.</p> <p>Current consultation highlighted to members including some aspects of the longer term review. The consultation document outlined the potential impacts across all authorities of a shift in the baseline for 2017/18 from the used of estimated to actual expenditure.</p>	

	<p>BP went through the consultation questions and sought the views of the Committee</p> <p>SB commented that the DfE do have a point around how EHCP's are used, some LA's have very low numbers compared to the size of their population but that is the way they have applied the criteria and also they have redirected finance and funding to the SEN support level so expenditure does not always relate directly to EHCPs.</p> <p>The consultation closes 24th March 2021, and comments were welcomed.</p> <p>CP commented that he had read the document and appreciated the assessment and queried the timing of this in the context of the SEND review. BP commented hoping there will be more information around this in the SEND review.</p> <p>SB understanding is that the SEND review will have a significant focus on SEN support and the graduated response and on inclusion. It is going to be largely focused around strengthening that early identification and support, providing very specific requirements for schools.</p> <p>BP commented that it may be an appropriate proposal on behalf of the board and would factor in, in terms of the inclusion data around SEN support measured in school census through K codes as well as plan data as a fuller picture of SEN needs and requirements maybe we should reflect that in a written response.</p> <p>It was agreed the inclusion of SEN Support data (School Census "K" code) could mitigate this and there was a case for considering this as an element in the Formula.</p> <p>CP asked about the inclusion of alternative provision in SEND funding.</p> <p>BP indicated the areas were often linked and we have a number of alternative providers under our framework that will be working with excluded pupils and SEN pupils.</p> <p>NT commented there is lots of reasons why young people end up in alternative provision but there is a growing concern sometimes youngsters end up in alternative provision because of an unmet SEN need that has not been identified early enough and the symptom of that is the behaviour which leads to exclusion and there is a rational around the linkage.</p> <p>All agreed for BP to draft a response and share it with the committee first for any final comments prior to submission before the final date of 24th March 2021.</p>	BP
8.	<p><b>2021/22 HN BUDGET</b></p> <p>GW asked for comments on this item for those that have not seen it at Schools Forum.</p>	

	<p>BP shared Appendix B with members that was represented to Schools Forum and represents the 2021/22 high needs budget the gross grant is - £41.9 m, prior to recoupment for external places. There is also the import/export adjustment for pupils educated outside Northumberland. After these adjustments there remained £38.3m for needs in Northumberland, but the 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block resulted in a final figure of £39.3m</p> <p>The budgets including inclusion and alternative provision are then reflected in the figures is below including some of the new growth elements for this year.</p> <p>High needs committee are reminded we have to fund the forecast March 2021 carried forward deficit which is £594,000 but the encouraging element is that the forecast March 2022 deficit is reduced at £45,000 which is progress. The potential annual deficit without the in-year transfer from the schools block would be £414.000. The focus must be on how this can be reduced further over the course of 2021/22.</p> <p>All happy with information shared.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p><b>SEN TOP UP FUNDING: NEW STAR FUNDING UPDATE</b></p> <p>SB presented and update to members about the new STAR funding.</p> <p>At the last meeting it was agreed that SB would carry a review of the STAR funding process and carry out a review of national practice and come back with a way forward and our next steps.</p> <p>One of our priorities for Education and Skills is that we will lead a development overall strategy to make sure we have an appropriate and an accessible provision and that is underpinned by three key things.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Workforce development and support for our schools and settings</li> <li>2. Transparent and equitable allocation of funds and increased accountability</li> <li>3. Clarification around ordinarily available provision – Angela Davies is leading on about developing a consistent benchmark and guidelines around what good inclusive practice looks like.</li> </ol> <p>What we are trying to achieve around transparency and work being done on costed provision maps for schools which are routinely used across most local authorities and we are working through with Bruce Parvin, Angela Davis and SENCO leads around what that will look like. We do need to have a short-term SEN support funding mechanism which is STAR at the moment which is not quite working in the way we wanted to.</p> <p>There is little consistent information available nationally around local authorities providing support to children who do not have EHCP. Many areas do not have a system in place around this and there are a range of different models in place most focus at the level of an individual pupil and involve applying for funding which will be attached to that pupil. A few have gone down the route of devolving funds to groups of schools to determine</p>	

<p>how they are used. Costed provision maps are in place across most local authorities but are not always standardised.</p> <p>The process around EHCP is frequently cited as being bureaucratic and Admin heavy. SB has done an audit of what information is being requested in Northumberland as part of the application process and we are in line with other areas. Parents and carers are wanting access to support more readily and more easily and if you do have a need for some support 20 weeks is a long time to complete the EHCP process and to wait for this.</p> <p>We need to consider the rationale for why we do want to providing support at SEN level; we do have a high number of COSA requests which is schools requesting EHC need assessment which is above the national average. Some of these could have needs met at SEN support, however schools are reporting budgetary challenges and this may be a factor. There are no financial incentives for schools to be inclusive.</p> <p>Parents lack confidence around school transition points. There is increase in demand for specialist education funding which is putting a pressure on the high needs block and potentially reducing funding that could be available to support learners at lower levels of need.</p> <p>While the STAR process has enabled provision outside an EHCP, the term short-term has put off many people using it as have applications have decreased. After a review, the application processes are the same as EHCP and therefore schools simply went for a plan as it is perceived as being more guaranteed.</p> <p>Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire were examples where this was currently happening. Derbyshire are doing it by individual pupil and Nottinghamshire are doing it by devolved funding to families of schools.</p> <p>(Agreed examples to be circulated to members by LH.)</p> <p>Principles of New system should be based on need, equitable, transparent, timely, accountable, and moderated. It should be flexible enough to consider groups of children, not just an individual child.</p> <p>Next steps: - Propose to explore a hybrid of two models to meet the need of an individual and groups of children where schools will be involved in how the money is allocated maybe through a panel which we would need to think about. We do need a robust set of financial models developed to pin this and would need to work out what the financial model would be, practicalities around the application process and the allocation process, we need to factor in moderation and governance, and we do need to pilot with schools and settings. This work is intended for the summer term, to go live on 1<sup>st</sup> September.</p> <p>DW thanked SB but expressed concerns if there were going to be changes to current funding in the time frames suggested due to the potential impact of this.</p>	<p>LH</p>
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	<p>SB confirmed that we have a current process in place and it's about how improve this so we can provide support because at the moment schools are not applying for it.</p> <p>NT clarified that this is the process that replaces the STAR funding which we know that people are not using so this is a recommendation of some of the high needs block is used in a different way to extend the reach of some high needs block funding to SEN support, so we are not changing the way we fund young people with plans that is staying as it is, it is additional to</p> <p>SB confirmed this is something will need to think about carefully and have conversations with schools around that. With regards the query around that it follows the child would be very keen in the things we look at how it does follow the child because what we know is we don't transition at the moment is a bit of a pressure point and not want to take away any support at a pressure point so will be looking at how it would follow the child and hope it will have a positive impact of the welcoming schools ability to meet needs as well succeed at a successful transitioning.</p> <p>It was agreed that STAR funding could be one way of supporting a child moving schools, e.g. from primary to secondary.</p> <p>CP commented from the start thought that STAR funding was a great step forward and the principle is great and happy that further improvements are being sought.</p> <p>Chair asked SB to provide an update for the 23<sup>rd</sup> June meeting to feedback to members.</p>	SB
10.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b> Nothing further discussed.</p>	
11.	<p><b>Date of Next meeting</b> Provisional date of Wednesday 12th May 2021 at 9.30am</p>	