

SCHOOLS FINANCE GROUP
on 6 November 2019 at Great Moor House

ISSUES FOR DEF ON 20 NOVEMBER 2019

Item 2	Learner Services to Schools – Contract re-commissioning SFG members and SENtient Heads to be involved in development of questions for school survey to be issued later in the autumn term to gauge views around possible future models of delivery for the services currently available through the learner services to schools contract.
Item 3	High Needs Block SEN officers, Finance officers and Heads to consider a range of possible models to enable specialist provision to be supported through mainstream school settings with a view to further reducing the need for placements to be made in independent sector providers.
Item 5	Schools Funding Arrangements 2020-2021 Subsequent to the outcome of the recent schools' funding consultation, SFG endorsed the recommendations around proposed arrangements for school funding for 2020-21 financial year. These recommendations will be set out in the Finance Report for DEF members to vote on as appropriate.

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Notes of meeting
on 6 November 2019 at Great Moor House

		Attendance		
		6/11/19	11/9/19	17/7/19
DCC				
Adrian Fox (Chair)	Head Accountant (E&L)	✓	✓	✓
Dawn Stabb	Head of Education & Learning	✓	✓	part
Julia Foster	Senior Manager SEND	✓	✓	✓
Ancilla McKenna	Senior Accountant (Schools)	Apologies	✓	✓
Heidi Watson-Jones	Service Support Officer (E&L)	✓	✓	✓
DAPH				
Jonathan Bishop	Cornerstone Academy	Apologies	✓	Apologies
Alun Dobson	Marwood Primary	✓	✓	✓
Jamie Stone	Denbury Primary	✓	✓	✓
Paul Walker	First Federation	Apologies	✓	✓
Penny Hammett	Fort Federation			✓
Martyn Boxall	Exeter Children's Federation	✓		
DASH				
Daryll Chapman	Dartmoor MAT	✓	✓	✓
Lorraine Heath	Uffculme Academy	✓	✓	✓
Matthew Shanks	Education South West	✓	✓	✓
Sammy Crook	Tiverton High School	✓	✓	✓
Andrew Davies	Exmouth Community College	✓	✓	
SHAD				
Keith Bennett	Marland School	✓	Apologies	✓
Jacqui Warne	Learn to Live Federation	✓		Apologies
DAG				
Faith Butler	Special	Apologies	✓	✓
Malcolm Dobbins	Primary	✓	Apologies	✓
Alex Walmsley	Secondary	✓	✓	✓
EY Providers				
Lydia Wright	Early Years – PVI providers	Apologies	✓	✓
In Attendance				
Katrina Harverson	Senior Accountant (E&L)	✓		

1. Item/Focus: Minutes and Matters Arising from meeting on 11 September 2019

Discussion:

- **SEND Invest to Save** – all bidders now informed of decisions and initial payments released. Julia Foster to ensure that SEN team liaise with DAPH on data for project targeting, and subsequent monitoring. Update to SFG requested in the spring term.
- **High Needs Place Planning** – next report to include NCY breakdown. Noted 68% of summer EHCP requests were from KS1. Agreed that DAPH communication to schools would be helpful re. submitting EHCP requests late in school year and ensuring that June/July requests have a named school contact for enquiries during the summer break.
- Total 1125 responses had been received to SEND/Early Help baseline survey.
- **Plus Packages** – banding revised in 18/19. Data to be shared – noted significant change in picture during 19/20 financial year.
- SEN Funding Moderation Group have considered Plus Package criteria, which could be helpful in identify support for Health needs, and cases which could be transferred to the banded funding model. Noted that new Plus Packages are becoming more consistent than historic

<p>agreements had been. SEN team to look at incoming requests for Plus Packages with requests above £12k to be considered at SEN funding moderation group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DS explained review of joint funding contributions from Health. 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	Minutes agreed as an accurate record.
Action:	<p>DA PH communication to schools re.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> submitting EHCP requests late in school year, and ensuring that late requests have a summer holiday contact for enquiries during the summer break.
2. Item/Focus: Learner Services to Schools Contract re-commissioning	
<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates provided at Schools Funding Consultation events and DAG conference. Paul Walker and Faith Butler attending Commissioning Project Board representing schools. Procurement and Legal attending a concurrent technical project group looking at models for marketing and procurement process. A third, corporate group to consider consistency of approach towards the future outcomes for the current Joint Venture. 66 services to schools currently included within the contract. DS to provide clarity around the services that schools are statutorily responsible for to highlight the implications to school leaders. It was felt that data on current levels of school buy-back would also be informative for heads. Survey to all schools to be circulated beginning of December. Considered potential difference in views between maintained schools and MATs, and that schools may wish to consider possibilities around en bloc arrangements for service contracting. Suggested that MATs and maintained schools be asked for their thoughts on a collaboration which might mirror the current de-delegation arrangement for maintained schools. Mindful of risk associated with de-delegated services, funding for which is currently voted and agreed on an annual basis. Suggested that schools be asked to consider bidding into these services which could in future be commissioned on a longer-term basis, the funding for which would be retained in schools and not de-delegated. This could give schools the option to separately commission these services, possibly through the emerging Schools Leadership Services CIO. Draft questions to be shared with SFG. Input from SFG members requested on further questions. Heads requested that questions should be framed in such a way that a clear steer for an onward direction is provided. SFG agreed that schools be asked to indicate their interest in participating in a Schools Focus Group. Parameters and Scope to be provided. DS to meet with SENTient Heads to consider the implications for special schools and obtain their views on a way forward. 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFG members to provide feedback on draft questions to be included in the schools survey. DS to provide clarity around the services that schools will be statutorily responsible for and data on current uptake. DS to meet with SENTient Heads to consider implications and views from special schools
3. Item/Focus: High Needs Block Update	
<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placements in independent sector continue to increase. Academic Year began with only 4 vacant places in Devon's special schools - only recourse for LA to place children in specialist provision is through the independent sector. Noted there were 26 ISP leavers at end of Summer term, and 105 starters in September 2019, due largely to the extension of the SEN age range to 25. 	

- LA needs to work more closely with mainstream schools to consider alternative interim provision until special school places become available. This can be hampered by parent/school relationship breakdown and strong parental preferences based on shared experiences from peers and social media. Mindful of legal drive encouraging parents to apply for EHCPs or appeal decisions to not assess.
- SFG endorsed their commitment to maintained schools retaining children with identified specialist need, but was clear that additional funding would be required to achieve this.
- Noted trial in another LA paying the equivalent of a maintained special school top up to mainstream schools to retain children in mainstream. SFG shared concerns around the limited availability of suitably experienced and qualified staff at short notice and for short term contracts. Discussed whether this could be addressed through outreach arrangements from special schools. Noted that other LAs fund special school outreach support to mainstream schools from statutory school improvement budget. Teaching School Alliances could be well placed to provide support.
- Julia Foster asked DASH and DASH to look collectively at how they can work more closely with the LA to provide education for children who are identified as needing specialist provision.
- Some heads concerned that there is limited knowledge of availability of external provision which can be accessed to help deliver plus packages. Key roles are particularly needed around play therapy, speech and language, CAMHS/mental health support. Need to support increasingly violent children in smaller group sizes who have family backgrounds of complex difficulties and multi-agency involvement.
- Suggested whether a model based on the 'Nursery Plus' provision could be developed for SEN with dedicated staff available to provide support in the classroom.
- Noted a funding 'tipping point' for schools becoming unable to adequately meet need and keep children safe.
- £15m has been approved by Capital Group to fund additional special school places; awaiting ratification of council budget in February 2020, in the meantime initial planning is underway. Simon Niles working with SEN team on plans for individual special schools.
- New officer (Helen Molteno) appointed to look at models to improve integration of services to improve the SEN experience for families and schools. Will be approaching school leaders to discuss issues and it would be helpful to highlight some of these suggested approaches.
- Noted proposal to ask health-related questions at admission to determine whether a child is school-ready; this could then trigger health visitor intervention.
- SFG requested analysis of children in care to other LAs with significant specialist needs.
- Considered whether it would be helpful for schools to make direct representation to DfE regarding SENDIST decisions to place children in independent schools.
- Discussed possible collaborations across mainstream and special schools to provide support for highly complex children. Mindful of difficulties in bringing together children with a mix of needs.
- SFG agreed that Management Actions identified for the current financial year will no longer be monitored as it has been demonstrated that additional savings cannot be found. A review of opportunities for block contracting will be explored during the next financial year.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	Report noted
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of number of children in care to other LAs with significant specialist need. KC • Options for suggested models for providing more specialised support through mainstream schools will be considered for further development and funding solutions. DS/JF/AF/KC

4. Item/Focus: DSG Monitoring – month 6

Discussion:

- Movement from month 4 saw rises of £2.4m due to an increase of 33 sole funded placements.
- In addition, due to the latest consultation from the DfE to prevent local authorities from transferring general resources to offset the DSG deficits from the end of financial year 2019-20 the reserve has been removed to accurately reflect the funding shortfall of High Needs.
- £18.7m funding gap across DSG.
- The variance at Month 6 is favourable at £153,000. This is due to changes in approach to forecasting element 3 funding offset by personalised budgets (net saving £501,000) and

<p>Independent Special Schools net savings from a reduction of 16 placements of £395,000. Additional costs in Maintained Special Schools of £121,000 and removal of management actions within £613,000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESFA have advised that the Teachers' Pay Grant is for 20/21 only and that this pay award is included in the additional amounts published of £4.8bn and £7.1bn for 21/22 and 22/23 respectively. SFG thanked the Finance and SEN teams for their detailed monitoring of the HNB, and recognised that there is not sufficient funding in the system to enable the LA to fulfil its legal obligations in SEN. 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report noted
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
5. Item/Focus: School Funding Consultation Outcome	
<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 105 responses had been received to school funding consultation. Teachers pay grant is separate for 2020/2021, but will be included within the funding already announced for the following 2 financial years. Removal of Reception Uplift – 93% of responses agreed Primary Lump Sum – 98% agreed to increase to £110k. Minimum Funding Guarantee – had suggested between 0.5 and 1.84% increase to move to NFF levels - 97 schools agreed with proposal. Increase in funding factor values to move towards NFF levels – 95% of responses agreed Surplus Funding to AWP – all but one school agreed. Movement between Blocks – noted comments and views received. SFG members disappointed at the level of response and felt this should be picked up in DASH and DAPH. Discussed how information could have been presented differently to enable school heads to better understand the funding situation. Expecting that the question will need to be formally asked of DEF to inform any DSG recovery plan to the DfE. Requested that school budget comparator demonstrates the impact on individual school budgets should a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to HNB be agreed. Discussed how a Nursery Plus SEN model could be funded and implemented through a funding block transfer. Additional £5.6m will be coming into Devon. This is a disappointing outcome, due mainly to the reduction in number of Free School Meals, protection in historic arrangements, and extremely low numbers of pupils living in IDACI band A areas. Considered the impact of the secondary mobility factor, which has increased funding for some schools. This will become a statutory factor within NFF. <p>Delegation and De-Delegation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that schools were overwhelmingly in favour of retaining all areas. Centrally Held Funding - Noted schools were in agreement to continue with the centrally held funding and recommendations on historic commitments. Historic Commitments – noted 20% reduction in historic commitments funding. A disapplication request will be allowed, based on requirement to continue to fund ongoing contracts already in place. Disapplication for Joint Use – to be requested to correct baselines through technical adjustments to exclude one-off expenditure and adjust prior year adjustments. This will ensure per pupil funding adjusted accordingly. 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<p>a) SFG endorsed the following proposals for DEF consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove the reception uplift in line with the NFF factors Increase the primary lump sum to £110k Set the MFG at plus 0.5% rising to plus 1.84% depending on affordability Set all NFF factors at the new rates prescribed in the October 19 operational guidance. Increase AWP for all pupils if funding permits. <p>b) DEF asked to note the views expressed by schools regarding transfer of 0.5%</p>

	<p>to High Needs Block. AF to add additional detail on numbers of responses for DEF report.</p> <p>c) DEF maintained schools' representatives to decide, phase by phase, the delegation or de-delegation of the services as outlined in the report.</p> <p>d) DEF consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to give £60k for the Emotional, Psychological and Social Wellbeing Service, co-produced by Public Health Devon and schools To retain the funding centrally at the same level as 2019/20 for Phase Associations To retain the funding centrally at the same level as 2019/20 for Schools Admissions Service.
Action:	
6. Item/Focus: Mutual Fund Board and appeals	
<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently £300k surplus. Reserves reducing slightly but are being closely monitored and are in line with anticipated payments. Following up with academies to confirm data on staffing FTE numbers to ensure correct premium is charged. 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report noted
Action:	
7. Item/Focus: AOB	
<p>CFR data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted 2018/19 CFR data has now published around schools surplus and deficit balances. Noted online tools available to schools, and schools financial value statements. <p>Supplementary fund for Teachers Pension Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are accompanying this grant with a supplementary fund. Schools will be able to apply to the fund if their grant allocation falls short of their actual pension cost increase between September 2019 and March 2020 by more than 0.05% of their overall budget for this period, and they will be reimbursed for costs above that threshold. This additional fund is in recognition of the substantial cost increase caused by the changes to the TPS employer contribution rate. We will provide guidance on how the fund will operate. 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	
Action:	

7. Item/Focus: Items for Finance Report for DEF on 20 November	
<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation responses and SFG-endorsed recommendations to DEF SEN Capital bid Options for Specialist Intervention and support through mainstream settings regarding Invest to Save projects, Special School, Outreach options, Nursery Plus 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report noted
Action:	

Next meetings:

Wednesday 8 January 2020 (9.15 – 12.45pm) – at Great Moor House – Room M8b

Wednesday 4 March 2020 (9.15 – 12.45pm) – at Larkbeare House – Exe Room