

# Notes of High Needs Funding Sub Group

Tuesday 17 October 2023 – 15.30 – 17.00

**Present:** Paul Walker (Chair), Kellie Knott, Adrian Fox, Alex Walmsley, Jamie Stone, Heidi Watson-Jones (notes)

**Apologies:** Rob Gammon, Adrian Hines, Rob Gasson, Bill Blythe, Penny Hammett, Gemma Rolstone, Keith Bennett, Alan Blackburn, Fay Bowler, Sammy Crook

		Actions:
1	<b>Finance Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Month 6 monitoring not yet complete, will be available for 6/11 SFG and will expect to see impact of beginning of new academic year.</li><li>Month 5 position slightly improved from month 4, which had included recognition of £10m pressure from unachievable savings, including full year effect of ceased Safety Valve projects.</li><li>Savings have been achieved linked to ceased EHCPs for young people in 3-5 year post 16 placements.</li><li>Noted recent DfE notification of funding formula error relates only to Schools' Block and not High Needs.</li><li>AP Task and Finish Group established to identify and address pattern of use of unregistered provision.</li><li>Highest risk area remains spend on independent sector placements. Looking at solutions around block contracting, and establishing new provision to avoid independent sector placements, particularly at key transition points.</li><li>SEND Improvement Plan includes Sufficiency strand, led by Simon Niles, with focus on moving provision down the continuum of learning to more inclusive, mainstream placements.</li><li>Discussed clarity of messaging around a broader approach to an Early Help offer and wraparound support for schools.</li></ul>	
2	<b>SEND Transformation Programme Update (Safety Valve)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Safety Valve timeline: DSG management plan to be submitted by 15 Dec 23.</li><li>All Safety Valve projects have been reviewed, some ceased and some new areas identified for delivery.</li><li>DfE priority is that LA demonstrates that it can deliver the programme, with each project outcome supported by data to move towards a balanced in-year budget.</li><li>DfE seeking confirmation of how LA will meet its contribution to the Safety Valve agreement. Hoping DfE contribution currently would be at around £100m, which could be invested to generate interest. DCC contribution of £80m proposed to be raised from capital receipts, and £5m year on year savings.</li><li>Currently planning for DSG deficit to be back in balance by March 2026.</li><li>Noted Kent CC safety valve funded by DfE at £140m, with £80m LA contribution.</li><li>Considered concerns around ongoing increase in volume and complexity of additional needs in schools. Agreed Early Help offer is key to stem the escalation.</li><li>DfE looking to the LA to ensure strong leadership will demonstrate improvement of practice and strategic partnership working; financial improvement will follow this.</li><li>Emerging government SEND and AP Improvement plan is hoped to start to shape a wider change in national policy.</li><li>Optimistic that this final tranche of safety valve funding will be successful for Devon.</li></ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Upcoming schools briefing – will be important for DCC leadership to articulate to school leaders how the refreshed approach will see more success, and how schools will feel this difference, and by when.</li><li>• Any pilot projects to be run in schools should be chosen to demonstrate a diverse landscape of schools and need.</li><li>• Discussed sector-led school improvement approach to SEND improvement. Improved sharing of Data and intelligence could inform a more targeted approach supported by a robust LA commissioning framework.</li></ul> <p><b>Alternative Provision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LA currently assessing the scale of use of unregistered AP providers, and LA capacity to quality assure provision. Unsure how schools are QA-ing AP providers they are commissioning.</li><li>• Recognise that this is an area of significant spend for both the LA, and schools. The group felt that schools are keen to work with the LA to map out use of AP providers with a view to a more strategic and jointly commissioned approach.</li><li>• Schools keen to develop a 'preferred provider' register for the LA of quality assured schools which could stimulate the market to provide more cost effective and good quality commissioning options.</li><li>• <b>ACTION: KK / Finance</b> to consider sharing of intelligence across LA and Schools to map use of AP providers across the county.</li></ul> <p><b>Resource Bases</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key to building sufficiency of SEND provision; re-launched approach to expand the number of places available in Devon in resourced provision.</li><li>• 5 schools currently engaged in statutory process for significant change with a view to opening new provision by September 2024, and an ongoing programme for next 3 years.</li><li>• Considered how school effectiveness team could support resource bases in inadequate schools; Suggested SLA could include criteria around Ofsted judgement slippage.</li></ul>	<b>KK / Finance</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Schools Funding Consultation: 0.5% Block Transfer proposal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Current financial year</b> – requested detail around how the £2.4m passported for Team Around the School has been allocated.</li><li>• Confirmed that £1.2m has been allocated to SEMH partnerships with funding due to be released to schools after Oct half term when SLAs are agreed with schools.</li><li>• Any surplus will remain in the Growth Fund to mitigate the current deficit position.</li><li>• Understand that no additional funding outside of the HNB was available at the time Donna Manson announced the initiative to school leaders in Spring 23.</li><li>• <b>2024/25 Position</b> – Mindful of DfE formula accounting error - which will potentially double the impact on school budgets, along with the 0.5% transfer.</li><li>• Discussed the planned allocation of the funds to establish a more robust early help offer. Noted that some of this work is already in place, but could not be expanded to provide an adequate wrap around support without the additional funds.</li><li>• Requested an internal briefing for DSLs outlining the difference in the range of support that could be provided with and without the funding agreed. <b>ACTION: KK</b> to brief DSLs Executive and share Early Help paper to be submitted to SEND Partnership Board.</li></ul>	<b>KK</b>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>ACTION: Simon Bissett</b> to draft report for future SFG updating on the progress of the SEMH Partnership developments.</li></ul>	<b>Simon B</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Future meetings to be scheduled close to SFG to feed in, avoid duplication of discussion and identify key points to feed into DEF alongside SEND Board updates.</li><li>• Arrangements for Chair to be reviewed at next meeting.</li><li>• Schools representation and involvement in SEND Transformation project strands: noted that most MATs have a SEND / Inclusion lead who could usefully engage and contribute to discussions – <b>ACTION: KK to consider which areas would best benefit from involvement of school leadership and SENDCOs.</b></li></ul>	