



Northumberland County Council

Wellbeing and Community Health Services Group

Education and Skills Service

Meeting: High Needs Sub Committee of the Schools Forum

Date: Wednesday 25th October 2023 Time: 9.30am

Venue: Virtual Teams Meeting

<p>Present: Graham Wilkins Chair and Governor at St Wilfrid's RC Primary School Graeme Atkins Headteacher, Hadrian Learning Trust Adele Brown Headteacher, Corbridge Middle Andrea Mead Headteacher Hillcrest Alan Hardie Nicola Threllfall Headteacher, Embleton Vincent Edwards Primary Barry Reed</p>	<p>Keith Faulkner V Chair and Governor of Collingwood Vickie Morton Cllr Richard Wearmouth Elected Member David Street Deputy Director of Education Sue Aviston Head of Schools Organisation and Resources Bruce Parvin Education & Skills Business Manager Amanda Gilchrist SEN Finance Officer Mike Finlay Head of SEND Abigail Russell Principal Accountant Neil Rodgers</p>
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Notes Lisa Headington

Start time:		Action:
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
2.	In Attendance See above	
3.	Apologies: Richard Carr, Graham Reiter, Ben Watson	
4.	Declaration of personal or pecuniary Interest in any agenda item. No declaration of pecuniary interest declared by members.	
5.	Minutes of last meeting/Matters Arising from meeting held on 29 March 2023 Alternative Provision:- GAs confirmed that the alternative provision is going well and was implemented in June. They have had interest from one or two other local schools coming to have a look and see if they can get a place. To be reviewed later in the year. Schools Forum to be updated. All agreed previous minutes as a True record	
6.	TERMS OF REFERENCE All agreed for Graham Wilkins to continue as Chair of the Committee All accepted the Terms of Reference on an ongoing basis.	
7.	Notional SEN Update The ESFA have produced specific guidance suggesting that authorities consider introducing additional school level notional funding. Northumberland extended its	

<p>scheme in, estimating that a further 34 schools would benefit. They'd be an overall cost of £340,000,</p> <p>The ESFA link was circulated as part of the report. It's not an additional budget or additional grant, it's a calculation based on existing elements of the national funding formula. Authorities have some self-determination in terms of how they set that and the approach we're taking in Northumberland at the moment is based on FSM6, IDACI and Low Prior Attainment.</p> <p>While FSM is part of those deprivation range of formula factors, we taken the decision that it is to fund free school meals. It's good to know that the ESFA are on board in relation to that, and clearly where we set our northern threshold is key to this, whether we set it too high or too low.</p> <p>In Appendix A, information from the 23/24 formula Funding published by the ESFA was highlighted for the North East authorities. Of the 12 authorities listed, 9 are either part of a Safety Valve agreement or the Delivering Better Value and Send programme.</p> <p>In terms of the calculated notional SEN levels as a % of Schools Block DSG, it would seem this had been set by Northumberland at an appropriate level. The North East figures ranged from 8.3% to 15.7%, the average was 12%. Northumberland's figure wast 12.5%.</p> <p>It was felt it was important to highlight that despite the effective targeting of this initiative, figures were increasing. The 2023 Summer term figure was £71,000 (59%) higher than the previous year. While the number of qualifying schools(45) was very similar the number of students receiving support within those schools had increased.</p> <p>DS commented that the same Notional model was being used to support specialist support bases within mainstream school provision.</p> <p>GA supported the paper and didn't see any need to amend or withdraw this at the present time, but would look for guidance from BP.</p> <p>The conclusion is that in the light of the ESFA guidance, we're doing the right thing, but this needs to remain under scrutiny in light of HN pressures. but in the context of the overall pressures on high needs, does it remain the right thing, continue to do?</p> <p>The HN Committee noted the report.</p>	
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<p>8.</p>	<p>SEN Update</p> <p>Mike Finlay presented his report to members and highlighted the growth of young people with send identified as at send support and particularly those identified as requesting an assessment and subsequently with an EHC plan.</p> <p>Over the last four years there's been 73% increase in the number of EHC plans since 2020. In this year to date as well, we're only a couple of months in, but the growth rate is continuing and you can see that and there's 45% increase year on year in requests. The two part legal test for assessment is dictated by The Children and Families Act, and that's what we're doing too.</p> <p>The case workers currently have roughly 200% of the average NE caseload, and this impacts on other services (e.g Educational Psychology) as well. This has also led to a decline in the number of EHCPS issued within the 20 week limit.</p> <p>VM queried the average time frame for a EHCP to be processed.</p> <p>MF indicated there are roughly 50% currently in time scale but this could deteriorate both locally and nationally.</p> <p>VM suggested managing expectations around that.</p> <p>David Street supported this re the 73% growth in in plans issued and the ongoing COSAa application growth means that the team have now dealing with 400 cases each when they were dealing with 200 cases each that has to have a knock on effect in terms of timeliness.</p> <p>MF confirmed we was speaking to parent groups in relation to this.</p> <p>Graeme Atkins stated he found the figures interesting reflect the situation of the NE as an outlier. If there was to be a deeper analysis of that, then it'd be interesting to understand what is it look like by primary and secondary phase.</p> <p>What does it look like across schools?</p> <p>Or like is there a kind of 8020 Pareto element happening in terms of of impacting on the on those figures and if payments going to come on to talking about for example special resource provisions if that if it didn't might miss understood that, but if that's the way to of more young people are in the mainstream rollins this thing, special schools, they have been interesting to see what the analysis is of those stats.</p> <p>For example, the number of units and number of best RP places locally. There's supposed to regionally supposed to nationally so.</p> <p>I think it's important to understand it. The truth behind some of the data.</p> <p>NT echoed GA's comments re caution with NE and National comparisons and suggested we may have a lower threshold.</p> <p>BR said he was interested to see how this changes over time as well, because that is very much a fixed point, but this might give more context to it as well.</p> <p>Bruce Parvin recommended the Send Commissioning Strategy as a source of historic information on the growth of special school places in Northumberland over the last five years. This has very much been demand driven to avoid amongst other reasons to avoid other external out of county placements in line with the idea that we were looking to educate children as close to home as appropriate.</p>	
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<p>MF said there are new and more effective ways of writing EHC plans that are starting to be used now. Mental health is a major factor that our colleagues in schools will recognize as one of the biggest factors within the presenting needs of young people.</p> <p>AH : It's interesting looking at this in association with the strategic planning document and it seems to be that the problem is only going to get worse because of the massively rapid increase in the number of pupils coming into the system, particularly with the ASD and SEMH I know it's beyond the remit of this group in schools forum, but does there need to be a kind of a more multi agency approach to whether early intervention could actually reduce that?</p> <p>I don't want to sound like I'm being political, but obviously like the impact of the cutting of Sure Start for example and family support, is there anything we can actually do to reduce the number of children who get to the point where they need an education healthcare plan?</p> <p>GW : I chair school appeals across 10 local authorities and the North East and one of the things that we noticed in the last 12 months is the number of young people with mental health issues in school appeals, especially in primary setting - is this an issue in Northumberland.</p> <p>MF : This is the case, a post is being created as well to provide that capacity and at the moment we're working with the NHS on bids for a piece of work that looks at those young people who are struggling at the moment to attend schools and in actuality, a high proportion of young people who are struggling to even leave their house. We are also seeking that reassurance for schools when they're doing the right thing but might feel that those risk of being penalised by someone like Ofsted.</p> <p>DS said we are exploring opportunities for further resources from social care and the health service. the guidance is really clear that it's a joint responsibility between education, health and social care. But at the same time, we do know that we are holding most of the responsibility and that will be continuing for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>GA welcomed the strategic thinking on this. There is a definite sense of shift in approach. These are the pockets of best practice that you know this is working as it should work. They're doing what's expected of them under the Code of Practice etc, but actually these schools that that are not and therefore there needs to be more accountability - is there any scope for this ?</p> <p>MF Schools need to provide the right environment and the right kind of sense of collaboration, schools want to engage and we are able to really positively engage with schools. Part of the shift is to as publicly as possible, celebrate those schools that are doing a good job in whatever way it might be. There are just over 150 schools signed up to a SEND framework where they're identifying their strengths and areas for development and action planning against that.</p> <p>GA said it's important that Northumberland Local Authority, alongside F-40,</p>	
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	<p>lobbies extremely hard nationally around high needs funding</p> <p>BR suggested mainstream provisions which are doing best are moving more towards behaviour support rather than behaviour management. This is evident with some students who join special schools.</p> <p>GW thanked Mike for his report and his efforts for young people who have special educational needs.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Projected DSG Position 2023/24 And 2024/25</p> <p>BP presented a paper which highlighted the impact of the revised Schools Block DSG allocations announced by the ESFA in October 2023, and how that could influence the request for a request for a transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs Block. This together with the other papers to this meeting are with the intention of generating discussion ahead of the formal consultation around the budget setting that goes to the next schools forum meeting.</p> <p>The original figures was £ 231.7 million, and the revised figures have reduced that by approximately £2 million to £229.7 million. GW said it had been his intention to reduce the transfer but this report concerned him in light of the service and financial pressures.</p> <p>BP reference AR’s previous report to Schools Forum highlighting forecast deficits of £0.7 million at March 2024 and £6.1 million at March 2025.</p> <p>SA stressed the importance of seeking schools views and getting them engaged in the funding consultation.</p> <p>David Street shared a presentation with members and a summary of the information heard so far, and the suggested next steps.</p> <p>BR highlighted work already done on expanding current provisions and creating spaces which will ultimately drive down the cost of having their educate pupils out of</p> <p>KF suggested that to make the necessary savings you will need to employ quite a few of the proposals in DS’s presentation.</p> <p>AH said it's really important that Dave's presentation is shared with as wide an audience as possible, because there are some tough decisions to be made and unfortunately the tough decisions can't be made in isolation.</p> <p>VM shared her experience re longer term strategy and seeing every teacher is a teacher of send and there are significant number of young people now in a classroom that will have some sort of additional need and actually taking an approach that tackles the teaching modules that are taught to new teachers.</p> <p>SA said the consultation could be prepared to go out immediately after the next</p>	

	<p>School Forum. While acknowledging we don't know what Chancellors Autumn Statement contained, the challenges faced by Northumberland were more deep rooted and wouldn't be addressed by that.</p> <p>GW and AH agreed with SA.</p> <p>GW thanked those in attendance for their contributions and said it had been a very productive meeting despite the challenges faced.</p>	
10.	<p>AOB</p> <p>No other business discussed</p>	
11.	<p>Date of Next meeting</p> <p>HN Committee to be confirmed - Schools Forum Wednesday 22 November 2023</p>	