

**SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**HIGH NEEDS SUB GROUP**  
**MEETING HELD ON 19 JUNE 2017**

**PRESENT:** Sue Symington (Chair), Kath Reach, Andy Bryson and Graham Waller.

**OFFICIAL:** Elaine Barrett, Secretary to Schools Forum.

1. **WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS / APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of G Burnett and J Mills.

The Chair gave an outline of the previous High Needs project that D McConnell had requested. This project was the result of the one outstanding action that had carried over regarding the out of borough provision.

G Waller tabled a financial document and the following was noted. Schools Forum did not make the decisions around the High Needs funding. There maybe an overlap with procurement who were reviewing the social care aspect of placements. G Waller and A Bryson would investigate the procurement project including the framework of providers and report back to this working party to avoid any overlap.

G Waller  
A Bryson

An analysis of spending on High Needs was provided comparing 2013 onwards. There were many areas of spend however for analysis purposes they had been summarized into six main specialist areas excluding Schools and Academies provision.

Hearing Impaired Service and Visually Impaired Service (HVI) was provided through Middlesbrough LA although these contracts were under review.

Agency placements showed the biggest spend of High Needs funding. This included the educational placements for LAC. It was noted that the spends had increased year on year from £1.7 million in 2013 / 2014 to £2.6 million in 2016 / 2017 which was a 52% increase. The number of LAC had risen from 368 children in 2013 to 430 in 2017 showing a steady upward trend. This was coupled with an increase in placement costs. There were a number of very high placements out of borough.

*It was questioned if these very high placements had been reviewed to investigate alternatives.* Currently Spark of Genius were operating joint arrangements with the LA on the King Edwin site in Norton where placements were charged at market price but any profits were shared. K Reach outlined that there were many children with named placements on plans however there were no spaces available as the settings were full.

The Free School application that had been submitted on behalf of the Tees Valley Combined Authority had been rejected. A local Special School had since submitted a bid for the Free School which would create additional spaces.

The main issue was around the volume of children needing placement and the pressure that this created on staff and workload. D McConnell had commissioned a review of ARP provision in the LA which would enable better use of facilities. The final report had been submitted to cabinet and would be circulated once available. There would be specialist hubs in the North, South and Central Stockton created. For those Schools who already had an ARP and they had been successful in the bid then the new provision would be effective 1 September 2017. Capital funding had been agreed for some Schools who required building works. The focus of the ARP review was to provide a co ordinated approach with early help support identified before full provision was required.

Non mainstream children were the focus of this project as they had the most complex needs and consequently generated the most costly provision. Identifying the costs for

this out of borough provision was key including the number of eligible children and potential numbers from EHCP's.

The second page of the financial document outlined the High Needs top ups per setting year on year. It was agreed that if the SEN department could categorise the types of needs against the settings and provide a cost per specialism this would be useful.

K Reach

Page three outlined the contingency funding allocation year on year by setting. Schools Forum had agreed the contingency fund as £500,000. Any requests for additional top ups came out of this fund.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following was discussed:

- Objectives - This project was the result of the one outstanding action that had carried over from the previous HNF project and we undertake to hopefully resolve the out of borough provision issue and resulting high costs with no negative impact on the children and their families;
- Scope - Any process associated with the out of area SEN provisions within the LA Stockton on Tees area may require review;
- Constraints - financial budgets, workload and time;
- Roles and Responsibilities – J Mills would provide the background to SEN provision and any previous initiatives that had not been successful. Moving forward the project plan would be set up with the Chair and G Waller with updates completed by J Mills;  
Sue Symington - Project Manager and Chair;  
Elaine Barrett – Secretary to Schools Forum;  
Graham Waller / Andy Bryson - LA Finance and risk management;  
Joanne Mills / Gill Burnett / Kath Reach - SEN and responsibility for Project Plan update;  
Louise Carling – Social Care;
- Main Products / Deliverables – Out of area provision becomes more cost effective with no negative effects on the service provision;
- Underlying assumptions – The outcome will be a reduction of children placed in out of area SEN provision and therefore will result in a reduction in overall costs;
- External Dependencies – linked to the procurement project already underway. CMap agree the out of borough placements and it was important that a member of this group attend these meetings however J Mills did sit on this panel;
- Project Review Points and process – the Chair would report back to Schools Forum on 4 July 2017. The next sub group would be held 19 September 2017 at 10.30am;
- Risk Assessment – this would be discussed at the next sub group meeting to determine if a risk assessment was required.

J Mills

Chair

## 3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 3.1 Social Care

It was noted that Jo Lee had been invited to represent the Social Care sector however it was appreciated that she had a heavy workload. The Chair would contact her by telephone to ascertain if a representative would be available to attend and give their valuable input.

Chair

## 4. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held on 19 September 2017 at 10.30am, venue to be confirmed.