



Schools Forum Date: 2 February 2017 Time: 8.30 am Venue: Shrewsbury Training and Development Centre, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury	<u>Item</u>	<u>Paper</u> D
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HIGH NEEDS AND EARLY HELP TASK & FINISH GROUPS

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Summary

At their meeting on 24 November 2016 Schools Forum received a second interim report on the work of the High Needs Task & Finish Group and the separate Early Help Task & Finish Group. The Forum were advised that there would be a further meeting of the combined membership of the groups, with a view to concluding the current programme of work of the groups.

A combined meeting of the groups took place on 6 January 2017. This paper reports back on the conclusions of the group's work and the proposals for addressing a number of outstanding tasks.

Recommendations

- To note the minutes from the meeting of the combined High Needs Task & Finish Group and Early Help Task & Finish Group on 6 January 2017.
- To note the proposed way forward in the areas of High Needs funding and early Help, following the conclusion of the work of the groups.

REPORT

1. On 17 March 2016 Schools Forum agreed to the establishment of two separate Task & Finish Groups to undertake reviews in relation to high needs funding and the use of resources to support Early Help. On 9 June 2016 Forum approved the draft Terms of Reference for the two groups, which included suggested membership of the groups and outline project timetables, allowing for regular progress reports to Schools Forum. Copies of the original terms of reference for the separate groups are attached at Appendix 1 (High Needs Task & Finish Group) and Appendix 2 (Early Help Task & Finish Group).

2. Schools Forum received interim progress reports - on 15 September and 24 November 2016 - on the work of the two groups, who held separate meetings on three dates (14 June, 15 July and 6 October 2016).
3. The original project plan proposed that a final report from the two Task & Finish Groups would be produced for the 24 November 2016 Schools Forum meeting. However, given a number of outstanding issues, it was agreed that a further combined meeting of the groups would be held and a final report brought to this meeting of Schools Forum. The meeting took place on 6 January 2017 – the notes of the meeting are attached at Appendix 3.
4. The combined membership of the two groups were satisfied that they have broadly met the objectives outlined in the terms of reference for each of the Task & Finish Groups. However, they acknowledged that there remained a number of outstanding tasks for the High Needs Task & Finish Group to complete, while there is a requirement for further and increased engagement around the Early Help agenda among all of the partners and stakeholders, which would be taken forward through other working group(s) constituted by officers in Children's Services.
5. In respect of the High Needs Task & Finish Group, the independent review on the banding system for Shropshire specialist schools has not yet been completed, with a report due later this term. As well as this, the second stage consultation on high need needs funding was opened on 14 December 2016 and runs through to 22 March 2017. As noted in the last report to Forum, the membership of the High Needs Task & Finish Group has the range of skills, experience and specialist knowledge to undertake the work required in assessing the impact of the funding reforms on high needs provision in Shropshire and to respond most effectively to the consultation. The meeting on 6 January 2017 therefore concluded that a further meeting of the group would be held later this term to complete these two specific areas of work.
6. At the meeting on 6 January 2017, it was agreed that the work of the Early Help Task & Finish Group has been concluded but that there is more work to do in relation to Early Help. The challenges facing all partners and stakeholders working to support some of the most vulnerable young people and families in Shropshire remain. There is a key requirement to continue to develop a coherent Early Help offer, to engage stakeholders in developing strategies to meet the needs of children and families, and to maximise the outcomes from the wide range of funding sources through joint commissioning, co-commissioning and pooling resources.

7. The group concluded that the Council's new Head of Service for Early Help, Partnerships and Commissioning - who takes up post in February - would be best placed to take a strategic lead on this area of work in the future. She would be asked to look at constituting an Early Help stakeholder group, onto which representation from the school's sector would be sought. The reporting lines won't be directly to Schools Forum, however Forum would be kept informed via the DSG and High Needs Block monitoring reports in particular, on the impact and outcomes of the schools funding being applied to this area of support to children and families.