



High Needs Task and Finish Group

Date: 6 October 2016

Time: 9.00 am

Venue: STDC, Monkmoor, Shrewsbury

MINUTES

Present

Phil Wilson, Business Support, Learning & Skills (Chair)
 Julia Dean, SEN, Learning & Skills
 Gwyneth Evans, Business Support, Learning & Skills
 Meryl Green, Derwen School (left 09.30)
 Sabrina Hobbs, Severndale Academy – Headteacher (arrived 10.05)
 Alan Parkhurst, Crowmoor Primary School – Headteacher
 Kerry Lynch, Wilfred Owen Primary School - Headteacher
 Ian Nurser, St Peter's CE Primary School - Headteacher
 Kay Redknapp, TMBSS Headteacher
 Colleen Male, Children's Social Care
 Sarah Sweeney, SEN, Learning & Skills
 Ruth Thomas, Derwen School – Headteacher (left 9.30 am)
 Marion Versluijs, Commissioning Development, Shropshire Council
 Stephen Waters, Finance, Shropshire Council
 Sarah Wilkins, Children's Social Care
 Helen Woodbridge, Business Support, Learning & Skills (notes)

ACTION

1. **Welcome**
PW welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **Apologies**
Apologies had been received from Robin Wilson and from Sabrina Hobbs for late arrival
Ruth Thomas and Meryl Green had advised that they would need to leave at 09.30.
3. **Notes from the meeting on 5 July 2016**
Sarah Sweeney made some amendments to point 6 and the notes have been amended.
PW confirmed that Schools Forum had approved the spending from the Contribution to Combined Budgets line for Young Carers and Enhance.
4. **Commissioning of independent review of banding – update**
Julie Dean advised that there had been limited response to the invitation to quote but that a provider/consultant had been found. A meeting is to be arranged asap to establish the scope. The aim is for completion by March 2017 (and to backdate funding). Phil Wilson asked if this had been accounted for in the budget planning and Stephen Waters advised that it had been. The consultant will be asked for their report by the end of January. It is expected that a facility for increases will be built in

to the system. Julia is to have further discussions with health colleagues re the funding for children with complex needs.

Phil Wilson reminded colleagues that this group is to report to Schools Forum in November.

Gwyneth Evans advised colleagues that due to the delay in the national funding formula, high needs funding is unclear from April 2018. Funding is not given for extra places but through a general uplift. We are expecting the result of the first round on consultation soon.

Headteachers were concerned about the role of health. They advised that Michael O'Prey had attended the last CPG meeting to discuss this.

Julia Dean stressed the importance of getting health colleagues on board and that getting the correct health professional to attend annual reviews is key. She reported that recently, working with health colleagues has become more positive.

5. Update on 2016-17 High Needs expenditure

Stephen Waters provided an update on the budget lines. As at August the projected underspend on the £17.525m budget is £52k.

1.2.1

Secondary/Post 16 underspent as FTEs have reduced from 291 to 264.

Julia Dean advised that EHCPS are to be reduced as Shropshire is well above average. She added that specialist placements have led to a reduction of places taken up in the maintained sector.

Phil Wilson was keen to know if action was being taken re the projected underspend. Stephen Waters advised that a complex monitoring spreadsheet is in place.

There can be a lag in adjusting the budgets as academisation happens. It was agreed for reporting purposes (although not for monitoring purposes) budget lines 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 can be combined.

1.2.2

It was reported that this line is overspent in several areas:

Primary overspent by £25k

Secondary 11-16 overspent by £147k

This is fairly equally spread across academies and is a repeated trend from the previous year. The budget had not been increased sufficiently.

Secondary Post 16 overspent by £21k

The breakdown of bandings is to shift significantly from September 2017 so this could change.

Julie Dean and Stephen Waters recognised that the budget needed to be realigned.

Post 16 FE budget had been increased but currently and underspend on £54k is forecasted. 134 students were budgeted for and there are only 130.

Gwyneth Evans advised that the f40 group had lobbied government re high needs funding through a letter dated 22 September to Justine Greening.

Sarah Sweeney added that the raise in participation age has added costs.

1.2.3

A placement tracker has been developed to monitor this budget line.

78 placements at a cost of £4.5m are in the budget. This budget is volatile as new pupils are unknown and can have high costs.

There was a lengthy discussion about prices for existing places and the West Midlands LAs agreement not to increase payments. Headteachers were surprised that support for pupils at private schools can sometimes be funded (currently 24 pupils costing £244k). Julia Dean suggested that this could be phased out in a risk managed fashion and added that clear written policies re SEN funding are required. This is required to be clear, consistent and fair – not open to legal challenge. It was suggested that the consultant could be asked to work on this. The policy could then

be considered by this group before going to Cabinet for approval/adoption. Gwyneth Evans suggested that an approach could be to provide a £2k top up for all, including private providers.

Julia Dean suggested that parents (through PACC/IASS) needed to be involved in any formation of SEN funding policy. She would also like to get a national/regional viewpoint and agreed to raise this at the WM SEN leads meeting tomorrow. It was agreed that an accurate position and direction of travel should be established and brought to the next meeting.

SEN nursery placements budget is for £35k but overspent by £32k. This will continue to increase as children are surviving for longer.

JD

1.2.5

This budget is underspent due to reduction of costs of Sensory Inclusion Service and vacancies in the SEN team. The SIS service and portage are being discussed with T&W. The underspend should only be for this year.

6. **Proposed use of High Needs Block funding to support Early Help**

PW established that there is £592k in the Contribution to Combined Budgets line which has been there from some years.

The additional £600k which is proposed to support Early Help (which costs £6m, £5m of which is from the base budget) was discussed.

Colleen Male recognised that all budgets are under pressure, identified the need for transparency and suggested the need to be smarter re provision.

Julia Dean spoke of the need for more work re EHCPs and SEN support. More SEN support will be required to reduce EHCPs and a graduated pathway (including Early Help) is to be considered.

Marion Versluijs suggested that timely relevant Early Help may prevent the need for an EHCP.

Julia Dean advised that there was already evidence of this and added that the process needs to be more joined up.

Sarah Sweeney suggested the need to develop local capacity.

Julia Dean thought that placing pupils out of county is detrimental to them becoming part of the community.

Sabrina Hobbs spoke of a social care element gap as parents need more help and support.

Marian Versluijs advised that Action for Children enables participation in the local community.

Sabrina Hobbs thought that 1:1 support is expensive and her school no longer uses this (except for health needs). There is a need to consider different ways of providing support for families with provision of more access for SEN pupils into mainstream activities.

Sarah Sweeney advised of working going on with IASS on a project like this.

Sarah Wilkins spoke of the short breaks/residential which were so important for parents and enable young people to become more independent.

Julie Dean suggested that early help needs to be embedded into EHCPs. She identified the need for schools to get professionals in early as otherwise their hard work is not having the required effect.

Phil Wilson asked the group if they were happy, in principle, to support the use of £600,000 DSG.

Kerry Lynch spoke of the importance of 1:1 support which allows pupils to move to mainstream socially first.

Sabrina Hobbs suggested that involvement of health is required earlier and to ensure that all professional bodies are accountable. Schools do refer for early help at an early stage but often have to wait.

Kay Redknapp referred to the increase in behavior issues – schools get help but it is

then taken away, perhaps too early. There is a need to work smarter.

Colleen Male agreed that it is important to ensure that early help is available and that it is got right. COMPASS is being looked at.

Kay Redknapp reported an increased understanding of a complicated process since her visit to early help.

Ian Nurser said that he couldn't argue with the need to spend the money on Early Help.

Sabrina Hobbs, Alan Parkhurst and Kerry Lynch agreed with the spending because there is no alternative.

However, more and improved information on impacts and outcomes is required.

Phil Wilson concluded by reporting that without this funding the services would disappear.

7. Areas for further work ahead of next meeting

No further work was identified at this stage.

8. Date of next Task & Finish Group meeting

TBA

9. Any Other Business

Colleen Male advised that the position of Head of Service for Early Help is being advertised.

DRAFT