

LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 10:00 A.M. ON TUESDAY, 12 JANUARY 2021
(Virtual meeting via Zoom)**

Present:

Schools Members:

Primary School Governors

Chris Bagguley
Ian Ball
Stephen Booth
Eleanor Hick
Michelle O'Neill
Robert Waring
Karen Stracey
Karen Stephens
Laurence Upton

Primary School Headteachers

Cathryn Antwis
Daniel Ballard
Sarah Barton
Jenny Birkin
Neil Gurman
Deanne Marsh
Keith Wright

Secondary School Governors

Janice Astley
John Davey
Brian Rollo
Gill Donohoe
Julie Langham

Secondary School Headteachers

Steve Campbell
Ivan Catlow
Mark Jackson

Nursery School Headteacher

Jan Holmes

Nursery School Governor

Thelma Cullen

Academy Governor

Chris McConnachie
Kathleen Cooper
Helen Dicker
Louise Shaw

Academy Principal/Headteacher

Matt Eastham
Gaynor Gorman
James Keulemans
Alan Porteous
John Tarbox

Alternative Provision Academy

Special School Academy

Louise Parrish

Special School Governor

Laura Brennan

Special School Headteacher

Peter Higham

Short Stay Governor

Short Stay Headteacher

Chris Mitchell (Sub for Jane Eccleston)

Members:

Early Years - PVI

Sharon Alexander
Peter Hindle
Anne Peat

Other Voting Members

Rosie Fearn

Observers

Mark Evans (Unison)
David Fann (NAHT)
Paul Hannant (NASUWT)
Barbara Reeves (sub for Ian Watkinson
(NEU)
Sam Ud-din (LASGB)

Observers - Members of the Public

CC Jennifer Mein

In attendance: Paul Bonser
Matt Dexter
Millie Dixon
Jane Rimmer
Kevin Smith
Howard Walsh

In the absence of Shaun Jukes, Stephen Booth took the Chair for this meeting of the Forum.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Gerard Collins, Jane Eccleston, Shaun Jukes, and Sandra Thornberry.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Chris Mitchell was present as a substitute for Jane Eccleston, representing the Short Stay Secondary Schools. Barbara Reeves (NEU) was present as a substitute for Ian Watkins.

3. FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The Forum noted a number of membership changes since the last meeting, including:

Primary Governor Vacancy

Karen Stephens, a governor at Woodlea Junior School was successful in the recent election process, for the primary governor vacancy

PRU Headteacher

Anne Kyle has left her post as head of Oswaltwistle School.

PRU headteachers have nominated Jane Eccleston, the head at Acorns School, as their new representative.

Head of School Improvement

Suzanne Edwards has now left the county council to return to headship.
Delyth Mathieson has been appointed as the permanent Head of School Improvement.

School Forum Finance Support Officer

Millie Dixon, has been appointed as School Forum Finance Support Officer.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the report,**
- b) **Welcomed Karen Stephens, Jane Eccleston, Delyth Mathieson, and Millie Dixon to the Forum;**
- c) **Thanked Anne Kyle and Suzanne Edwards for their contribution to the Forum.**

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 20 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2020 that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK MONITORING 2020/21

Provisional autumn term 2020/21 data has now been reviewed to enable an updated forecast position to be estimated for 31 March 2021.

The forecast High Needs block budget position at 31 March 2021 predicts a circa £2m surplus.

There remains some concerns around the ongoing financial pressures facing this block, as forecasting data may have been impacted due to COVID-19 implications and the demand and costs are expected to rise in the spring term 2021.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the report**
- b) **Agreed to bear this information in mind when making decisions/recommendations about the 2021/22 Schools Budget.**

7. CONSIDERATION OF THE SCHOOLS BUDGET 2021/22

- a) **Schools Budget 2021/22**
- b) **Schools Block Transfer Consultation – Analysis and Responses**
- c) **Recommendations from the Forum Chair's Group Budget Meeting**
- d) **Formal Forum Decisions relating to the Schools Budget 2021/22**

The Forum consider the 4 Schools Budget sub items as a single report.

A report was presented setting out information about the Schools Budget for 2021/22. This included information from the original report to the Forum and subsequent information from the Chair's Working Group meeting held on 7 January 2021 and the responses to the consultation on a possible Schools Block transfer. The overall DSG allocations were provided as set out in the table below and the report provided further details on how the funding blocks were calculated using the DfE's national funding formulae.

Forecast DSG for 2021/22

Forecast DSG Income	£m's
Schools Block	849.944
High Needs Block	151.033
Early Years Block	82.472
Central Schools Services Block	6.766
Gross Total forecast DSG Income	1,090.214
Total deductions for direct high needs payments made by the ESFA	-8.402
Net Total forecast DSG Income	1,081.812

Estimated Schools Budget 2021/22

Forecast DSG Expenditure	£m's
Schools Block	847.944
High Needs Block	151.033
Early Years Block	84.472
Central Schools Services Block	6.766
Total deductions for direct high needs payments made by the ESFA	-8.402
Total forecast DSG Expenditure	1,081.812

In aggregate terms the 2021/22 Gross DSG allocation is some £86m higher than that received in 2020/21. This increase is due to:

- Lancashire's share of the increased £2.2b funding nationally made available by Government, including £730m for the High Needs Block;
- Lancashire's share of the increased £44m nationally for the Early Years Block;
- Incorporation of funding for the teachers pay and pensions grants in the Schools, High Needs and Central Schools Services Blocks that were previously paid as separate grants;
- An increase in the overall numbers of pupils in Lancashire compared to 2020/21.

Further information on the 2021/22 budget proposals were presented to the meeting:

Schools Block 2021/22

The Forum previously agreed that the Government's NFF methodology should be used as the Lancashire formula from 2018/19, and this continues in 2021/22. 2021/22 NFF changes include:

- Every mainstream school will be allocated at least 2% more pupil-led funding per pupil compared to its 2020/21 NFF baseline;
- Incorporation of funding for teachers pay & pensions grants that were previously paid separately;
- Additional funding for small and remote schools will increase in 2021/22;
- Mandatory Minimum Pupil Funding levels now include pay and pensions:
 - £4,180 per pupil for primary schools (£3,750 per pupil for primary schools in 2020/21)
 - £5,415 per pupil for secondary schools (£5,000 per pupil for secondary schools in 2020/21)

- The 2019 update to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) has been incorporated in deprivation funding

Modelling indicated that the NFF can be implemented/mirrored in full as the local formula, including +2.0% MFG and leaves circa £2m of headroom. A consultation had therefore been held with schools about the possible transfer of headroom to support pressures in the Early Years Block. £2m represents 0.26% of the Schools Block, prior to the inclusion of the teachers pay and pensions grant uplifts, so is below 0.5% level requiring transfers to be approved by the Secretary of State and a decision can therefore be approved by the Forum.

Analysis and comments from the consultation responses were provided for the Forum, with 91% of 79 school submissions supporting the transfer.

Information was also provided about the Schools Block recommendation that the Growth Fund from April 2021 for future agreements, should use the DfE MPF rate incorporating the pay and pension grants:

- Primary £4,180 per pupil
- Secondary £5,415 per pupil

High Needs Block 2021/22

DfE announcements provide extra £730m nationally for HNB in 2021/22, plus teachers pay and pensions grants have been included in the DSG allocation. Lancashire's share equates to circa £15.5m additional funding.

Modelling of the additional HNB funding suggests that:

- the forecast growth in expenditure from April 2021 can be covered
- a similar level of increase to funding rates as those applying to the Schools Block rates can be afforded

Proposals were shared setting out a 2% increase in the WPN rate and the school specific rate for in special schools and PRUs.

A proposal to align Excluded Pupils, Medical and Other pupils to WPN value at Band E2 (1 WPN) from April 2021 was also presented:

- in the secondary PRU formula, 1 WPN paid rather than the average of the secondary AWPU value
- in the primary PRU formula, 2/3 of 1 WPN paid rather than the primary AWPU value

It was noted that both phases receive a circa £30 per pupil increase using the revised methodology.

In line with working group recommendations, the incorporation of teachers pay and pensions grant payments to special schools and PRUs was to pay via the school specific factor, at £660 per pupil, as a separate line on budget statements

The Hospital Education budget had also been increased to take account of inflation and a pay and pensions uplift.

Provision had also been made in the proposals to account of circa £1.5m in the AP budget to mitigate for missing demand in 2020/21, including additional funding made in the year.

Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) 2021/22

Information was also provided that funding rates for PPG will remain unchanged in 2021/22. Although it was noted that DfE had indicated they will be using data from the autumn term school census to calculate pupil premium allocations from October 2020 onwards, with exceptions including alternative provision and pupil referral units where eligibility will continue to be based on the January census.

Information on other grants for 2021/22 was still awaited.

Early Years Block 2021/22

The Government increased early years funding by £44m nationally for 2021/22, as follows:

- 2021/22 allocations for 3 and 4 years olds increased by 6p per hour by DfE
- 2021/22 allocations for 2 year olds increased by 8p per hour by DfE.

The proposed budget assumes the above increases are added to the relevant base rates, but it was noted that this dilutes the proportion of deprivation funding for 3/4 year olds.

For the deprivation supplement, the formula has been updated to reflect the 2019 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) dataset, to mirror Schools and High Needs Block.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and Disability Access Fund DAF remain unchanged for 2021/22.

The Maintained nursery school supplementary funding allocations also continue in 2021/22, but DfE indicate that allocations for September 2021 to March 2022 are conditional and may be subject to change. The Government confirmed that their commitment to the long-term funding of maintained nursery schools is unchanged.

Following on from Schools Block recommendations the proposed transfer of £2m headroom from Schools Block to EYB would provide for one year only support to enable the increase in Government funding to be passed on in full and to continue the additional local increases facilitated by the similar transfer last year.

Central School Services Block 2021/22

For 2021/22, proposals recommended a continuation of 2020/21 combined budget allocations:

- MASH (£150k)
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service (200k)

It was noted that this was affordable in 2021/22 due to subsidy from the 'ongoing costs' allocation, but this is not sustainable, as future reductions in 'historic costs' funding will occur.

The Chair's Group had asked that enquiries be made of DfE to ascertain if these contributions can be made from elsewhere in DSG as 'Historic Commitments' funding is reduced/ceased. It was advised that services should be notified that 'combined budget' allocations for 2022/23 would need to cease and any future funding from DSG could not be guaranteed, but consideration would be given to options depending on the response from DfE.

The proposed Central School Services Block for 2021/22 was provided for members, as set out below:

	Central School Services Block 2020/21	Central School Services Block 2020/21	Variance
	£m	£m	£m
ESG Retained Duties (transferred to DSG)	2.591	2.591	-
Overheads	0.262	0.397	0.135
Copyright Licence	0.960	1.000	0.040
Pupil Access (Admissions)	0.937	1.400	0.463
School Forum	0.188	0.188	-
Early Intervention	0.350	0.350	-
PFI - Sixth Form	0.859	0.915	0.056
Prudential Borrowing	0.240	-	(0.240)
Rate Rebates	-	(0.075)	(0.075)
Total CSSB	6.387	6.766	0.379

Information was also provided on the Commissioned Services for 2021/22, as below:

Commissioned Services	Budget 2020/21	High Needs Budget	Early Years Budget	CSSB	Total	Variance
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
PFI - Special	1.176	1.194	-	-	1.194	0.018
Commissioned Alternative Provision services	1.000	1.000	-	-	1.000	-
Hospital Provision	0.858	0.927	-	-	0.927	0.069
Out County - Specialist provision places	16.000	19.500	-	-	19.500	3.500
Out County - Mainstream / academies places	1.410	2.000	-	-	2.000	0.590
SEND Specialised Equipment	0.447	0.447	-	-	0.447	-
SEND Inclusion Projects	1.247	0.747	0.500	-	1.247	-
SEND Teachers & Support	3.464	3.464	-	-	3.464	-
Multi Agency Development	0.075	0.075	-	-	0.075	-
Support for Vulnerable Pupils - SI	0.899	0.899	-	-	0.899	-
Overheads	0.651	1.052	-	-	1.052	(0.599)
Total	28.227	31.305	0.500	-	31.805	3.578

Context about the level of DSG balances across recent years was also provided:

Year end	DSG Reserve	In year movement
31.03.15	£27.94m	
31.03.16	£20.15m	-£7.79m
31.03.17	£20.69m	+£0.54m
31.03.18	£14.40m	-£6.29m
31.03.19	£12.74m	-£1.66m
31.03.20	£11.15m	-£1.59m

Members considered the information provided and discussed key issues and implications including the proposal to align PRU Excluded Pupils, Medical and Other pupils to the WPN value at Band E2 (1 WPN) from April 2021, the increase in the out-county budget, commissioned places used in the AP formula and pressures on early years funding.

A questions about Inclusion Hub services were also raised.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the report, including the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations and the budget proposals for each of the 4 funding blocks;**
- b) **Noted the information from the Forum Chair's Group meeting on 7 January 2021 and the responses from the consultation with schools on the Schools Block transfer proposals;**
- c) **Voted on the 2021/22 Schools Budget Proposals, as follows:**

Unanimously supported the Schools Block proposals, as follows:

- **The DfE's National Funding Formula (NFF) methodology should continue to be used as the Lancashire formula in 2021/22;**
- **The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) be set at +2.0% for 2021/22, mirroring the National Funding Formula;**
- **To transfer Schools Block headroom of circa £2m (0.26% of the Schools Block) once the National Funding Formula methodology has been implemented in full as the local formula, to support the Early Years Block.**

Unanimously supported the High Needs Block (HNB) proposals, as follows:

- **To use the increased High Needs Block allocation to cover the forecast growth in High Needs expenditure from April 2021;**
- **To increase High Needs Block expenditure to broadly match uplifts in the mainstream sector , including:**
 - **Increasing the Weighted Pupil Numbers (WPN) rate by 2% to £4,391**
 - **Special School and PRU School Specific factors uplifted by 2%**
 - **Increase the Hospital Education budget to £927k**
- **To align Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Excluded Pupils, Medical and Other pupils to the Weighted Pupil Number (WPN) value at Band E2 (1 WPN) from April 2021:**
 - **in the secondary PRU formula, 1 WPN would be paid rather than the average of the secondary AWPU value;**
 - **in the primary PRU formula, 2/3 of 1 WPN would be paid rather than the primary AWPU value.**
- **For the teachers pay and pensions grants to be incorporated into the special school and PRU school specific factor, at £660 per pupil, as a separate line on budget statements.**

Unanimously supported the Early Years Block (EYB) proposals, as follows:

- **To passport increased Government allocations for 2021/22 by increasing base rates for 2 year olds by 8p per hour and 3&4 year olds by 6p per hour;**
- **The transfer of the £2m Schools Block Headroom to the Early Years Block, to allow the increase in Government funding to be passed on in full and to continue the additional local increases facilitated by the similar transfer first supported by a Schools Block transfer in 2020/21, to continue into 2021/22;**

Unanimously supported Central School Services Block (CSSB) proposals, as follows:

- The proposals for the Central School Services Block in 2021/22, including the allocations of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Combined Budgets as follows:
 - MASH - £150k;
 - Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service - £200k.
 - Requested that enquiries be made of DfE to ascertain if these contributions can be made from elsewhere in DSG as 'Historic Commitments' funding is ceased.
- d) Supported the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Reserve underwriting the uncertainties around the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget, across Schools Block, High Needs Block, Early Years Block and the Central School Services Block;
- e) Unanimously approved the budget lines requiring Forum agreement, as set out below:

Function	LA proposals 2021/22	Proposed Expenditure 2021/22 £m
Consultation on Formula Changes		
As required by DfE, the HNB working group were consulted on the best way to incorporate the former teachers pay and teachers pensions grants in the special school and AP formulae	Proposals look to incorporate the former teachers pay and teachers pensions grants in the HNB formulae by an increase to the school specific factor. A school specific factor is available in both the special school and PRU formulae and an additional allocation of £660 per pupil will be included in both for 2021/22, included as a separate line on budget statements, so that it is transparent and easily identifiable.	2.598
In response to requests from PRU representatives, proposals have been developed to use WPN values in the AP funding formula, rather than AWPU values	Proposals look to incorporate the WPN value at Band E2 (1 WPN) in the secondary PRU formula rather than the average of the secondary AWPU value, and at 2/3 the WPN value (at Band E2) for primary PRUs, rather than the primary AWPU. Both phases receive a circa £30 per pupil increase using this formula	0.013
De-delegation for mainstream schools	LA proposals for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools in financial difficulty; • Museum service (primary only); • Staff Costs Public duties/Suspensions; • Primary Inclusion Hubs Approved by the Schools Forum on 20 October 2020	3.456
Movement of up to headroom from the schools block to other blocks	Consultation responses are provided in the Forum papers, and in accordance with responses and recommendations from the Schools Block, proposals to transfer	2.000

	headroom from Schools Block to the Early Years are built into the Schools Budget 2021/22.	
Contracts (where the LA is entering a contract to be funded from the schools budget)	No Proposals at this time	
Financial issues relating to:		
arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding	Proposals contained in the High Needs Block Working Group recommendations report to the Forum and the Forum budget papers	98.839
arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding	Proposals contained in the High Needs Block Working Group recommendations report to the Forum and the Forum budget papers	12.094
arrangements for early years provision	Proposals contained in the Early Years Block Working Group report to the Forum and the Forum budget papers	84.471
administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants	No Proposals at this time beyond passporting DfE allocations to schools	
Minimum funding guarantee (MFG)	Consultation responses on MFG reported to Forum on 20 October 2020 and recommended that the level of MFG to be used in the Lancashire funding formula for 2021/22 be set at +2.0%.	
General Duties for maintained schools Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools	No Proposals at this time	
Central spend on and the criteria for allocating funding from:		
funding for significant pre-16 pupil growth, including new schools set up to meet basic need, whether maintained or academy	Policy previously agreed by the Schools Forum. Proposal to increase the growth fund unit values in line with increased NFF Minimum Pupil Funding levels for 2021/22, using the higher rate that incorporates previous teachers pay and pensions grants Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2021/22 report	1.797
funding for good or outstanding schools with falling rolls where	No Proposals at this time	-

growth in pupil numbers is expected within three years		
Central spend on:		
early years block provision funding to enable all schools to meet the infant class size requirement	No Proposals at this time	
back-pay for equal pay claims	No Proposals at this time	
remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies	No Proposals at this time	
places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils	No Proposals at this time	
admissions	Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2021/22 report	1.400
servicing of schools forum	Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2021/22 report	0.188
Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools	No Proposals at this time	
Central spend on:		
capital expenditure funded from revenue: projects must have been planned and decided on prior to April 2013 so no new projects can be charged	No Proposals at this time	
contribution to combined budgets: this is where the schools forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget to services which would otherwise be funded from other sources	Final combined budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2021/22 report	0.350
existing termination of employment costs (costs for specific individuals must have been approved prior to April 2013 so no new redundancy costs can be charged)	No Proposals at this time	
prudential borrowing costs – the commitment must have been approved prior to April 2013	Historic commitment ended in 2020/21	0.000
Central spend on:		
high needs block provision	2021/22 funding level presented as part of the Schools Budget setting proposals	31.305
central licences negotiated by the Secretary of State	2021/22 funding level presented as part of the Schools Budget setting proposals	1.000
Carry forward a deficit on central expenditure to the next year to be funded from the schools budget	No Proposals at this time	

Any brought forward deficit on de-delegated services which is to be met by the overall schools budget.	No Proposals at this time	
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After the meeting, a copy of an Inclusion Hub report due to go to the Lancashire Partnership Board was circulated to members and provided a January 2021 update of the provision in each district, information on barriers and possible solutions to Inclusion Hubs work and suggested impact measures and next steps.

Members also asked to be kept informed with any further details relating to the change of PPG dataset from the January census to the October census.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCHOOLS BLOCK WORKING GROUP

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group held on 8 December 2020.

i. School Block Funding 2021/22 and local modelling and numbers

This report provided an update on schools block modelling for 2021/22 and local pupil number data from the October 2020 school census.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.*

The Forum noted that final pupil information and allocations had been included in Schools Budget report.

ii. Consultation on the Possible Schools Block Transfer to the Early Years Block

The initial estimates suggest that the implementation of the National School Funding Formula (NFF) methodology in Lancashire is affordable as the local funding formula and modelling indicates that there could still be circa £2m of headroom available in 2021/22. The county council has therefore issued a consultation with the schools seeking views on a possible transfer of headroom only, from the Schools Block to be used in the Early Years Block.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Expressed support for the proposed Schools Block transfer to Early Years Block;*
- c) Noted that final decisions would be taken by the Forum in January when school consultation responses and final DSG allocations would be available.*

The Forum noted that final consultation information had been included in Schools Budget report.

iii. School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

Each year, reports are presented to the Forum about the arrangements for the School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme. This report provided information around scheme arrangements in 2020/21 and proposals for 2021/22

Key proposals for 2021/22 supported by working group were:

All these factors combined make planning for 2021/22 extremely difficult. However, some proposals were outlined for consideration by the working group.

Operation of the Scheme

Changes to the operation of the scheme could include the amendments agreed by the Forum during 2020/21, including:

- Self-isolation – support for cover for staff self isolating due to COVID-19 symptoms or as a result of test and trace
- In year changes to the level of cover provided will be suspended in 2021/22 so that the scheme reserve can be protected in order to cope with the demands caused by the pandemic.
- Scheme will match the government guidance for workers who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV)

Scheme Premiums

- Teaching staff element:+6%
- Support staff element :+10%

Reimbursement rates

- Reimbursement rates in the teaching staff scheme for 2021/22 will be held at 2020/21 levels, in line with the Chancellor's decision to freeze public sector pay.
- For the support staff scheme, reimbursements are aligned to estimated actual grades of staff in the School Financial Services Budget Preparation Guidance. This will recognise the pay freeze for staff on higher grades and incorporate the pay rises for staff on less than £24,000 per annum, who will receive a minimum of a £250 increase.

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the proposed 2021/22 School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme arrangements.*

The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations.

iv. Schools Expansion Funding 2021/22

The School Expansion: Policy for Additional Revenue Funding provides support for basic need growth commissioned by the LA. Information was provided about the level of MPF to be used in the 2021/22 Expansion Funding Policy.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the use of the higher MPF levels in the 2021/22 School Expansion Funding Policy, incorporating pay and pensions uplifts as the level most reflective of the additional costs being borne by schools for extra pupils*

The Forum noted that working group recommendations had been included in Schools Budget report.

v. Covid workforce fund to support with costs of staff absences in schools and colleges

On 27 November 2020, the DfE announced new funding to support schools and colleges during Covid pandemic. The Covid workforce fund is to support with costs of staff absences in schools and colleges and information about the details and conditions of the fund were provided.

The Working Group

a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum noted the report.

vi. Update on exceptional cost claim related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) from March to July 2020

DfE have now assessed all claims for costs outside of the three eligible categories and have determined there are no new categories of extraordinary costs that they are able to reimburse.

The Working Group:

a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum noted the report.

vii. The Cost of a New School

An update was provided about the possibility of new school provision being required in certain areas to meet this demand, and the revenue funding implications associated with this.

The Working Group:

a) *Noted the information.*

The Forum noted the report.

viii. Covid Winter Grant Scheme (FSM during Christmas holiday period)

Members enquired if there was any information available from the county council about the Covid Winter Grant Scheme. Information was confirmed that the government announced a package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period.

The Working Group:

a) *Noted the information.*

The Forum noted the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HIGH NEEDS BLOCK WORKING GROUP

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group held on 3 December 2020.

i. SEND/AP Strategy Update

Dr Sally Richardson, Head of the Inclusion Service attended the working Group for this item. Sally discussed key issues raised by the working group at previous meetings, including the drivers behind the increases in the Out County budget, including increased number of pupils

needing placements and rises in the costs of provision. Information was provided about some of the strategies being deployed to control expenditure, which included the commissioning arrangements.

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Agreed to consider any funding implications that would support the various High Needs Block strategies going forward.*

The Forum noted that cost pressures and budget implications had been included in Schools Budget report.

ii. High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2021/22

The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations require that the Forum is consulted annually on the places to be commissioned by the local authority in different schools and other institutions, and on the arrangements for paying top-up funding. This report provided an update about the proposed HNB places to be commissioned for 2021/22, including those place numbers submitted on the DfE on the annual place change notification submission. All the changes to commissioned places relate to the 2021/22 academic year.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the HNB commissioned places set out in the report.*

The Forum noted that commissioned place numbers had been included in Schools Budget report.

iii. Historic Commitments Combined Budget Funding 2021/22 (MASH)

Information on DfE School Funding announcements for 2021/22 included confirmation that the historic commitments element of the Central School Services Block (CSSB) will decrease by a further 20% from April 2021. This report provided information from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) giving a 2020 update.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Agreed to bear the information provided in mind when setting the 2021/22 Schools Budget.*

The Forum noted that recommendations had been included in Schools Budget report.

iv. HNB Teachers Pay and Pensions Grant

For 2021/22 the DfE have incorporated the teachers' pay grant (TPG) and teachers' pension employer contribution grant (TPECG) within the high needs national funding formula. Information was provided on options for incorporating this allocation in Lancashire special school and PRU budgets from April 2021.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the proposed methodology for allocating Teachers' pay and employer contribution funding in 2021/22.*

The Forum noted that recommendations had been included in Schools Budget report.

v. School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

Each year, reports are presented to the Forum about the arrangements for the School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme. This report provided information around scheme arrangements in 2020/21 and proposals for 2021/22

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the proposed 2021/22 School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme arrangements.*

The Forum noted that recommendations had been included in Schools Block report.

vi. High Needs Block Termly Redetermination Process

Some data issues have occurred in the High Needs Block Termly Redetermination Process, partly due to changes in the arrangements for processing the data in the Inclusion Service. The service have looked into this and intend to make a permanent additional appointment to the service for someone responsible for dealing with the data. Appointments are expected after Christmas and this should improve the data validity going forward.

In addition, for the HNB autumn term 2020 redeterminations the higher of autumn 2020 and autumn 20196 has been used. Statements will be issued in the normal way and an additional letter will be issued to each school explaining the calculation and if any top up protection has been included in the redetermination.

PRU representatives reported that the Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact on the NOR at short stay schools and suggested that protections are again need in the spring term 2021,

The Working Group:

- a) *Notes the information;*
- b) *Support the extension of HNB redetermination protections into the spring term 2021.*

The Forum noted the recommendations and that further DfE guidance was awaited about the spring term census 2021 now that we were in lockdown 3.

vii. Update on exceptional cost claim related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) from March to July 2020

DfE have now assessed all claims for costs outside of the three eligible categories and have determined there are no new categories of extraordinary costs that they are able to reimburse.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum noted the report.

viii. Covid workforce fund to support with costs of staff absences in schools and colleges

On 27 November 2020, the DfE announced new funding to support schools and colleges during Covid pandemic. The Covid workforce fund is to support with costs of staff absences

in schools and colleges and information about the details and conditions of the fund were provided.

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum noted the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EARLY YEARS BLOCK WORKING GROUP

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group held on 1 December 2020.

i. Early Years Block Funding 2021/22

Information was provided about the Chancellor's November 2020 announcements of additional £44m for early years education in 2021/22. A draft letter from the working group Chair to the Schools Forum was shared with members, which highlighted the significant pressures being faced by the sector and asked for consideration of three measures:

- Funding for the 2021 spring term, with at least a similar measure as applied this term in comparing it with spring 2020;
- A one off Covid support payment for each setting;
- Additional funding for the whole of the next financial year.

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report;*

- b) *Supported the submission of the letter from the Chair of the EYB Working Group.*

Subsequent to the working group meeting, the correspondence from the chair was sent and an update is provided below in connection with the 3 key representations made in the EYB letter.

- ***Spring Term Funding 2021***

On 17 December 2020, the DfE confirmed that funding for early years for the spring term 2021 will be purely on the basis of the January 2021 census data. However since that point, the country has entered lockdown 3 and further advice from DfE is expected shortly.

The Forum noted the report.

- ***A one off Covid support payment for each setting***

In response to the suggestion for a covid related payment to be made to early years providers and following further discussions with the working group chair, a consultation was issued on 14 December 2020.

The proposal is for a one-off lump sum payment to be made in the spring term 2021 of £250 for childminders and £1,000 for other early years providers, to assist with covid related costs. As the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserve would be used to fund this allocation, views were sought from all Lancashire schools and academies and early years settings in receipt of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding.

A copy of the consultation response analysis and comments were shared with the Forum.

Question: Do you agree with the proposal to make a one-off Covid allocation to Lancashire early years providers in Spring 2021?				
Type of Setting	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Private, Voluntary and Independent Setting	105	0	3	108
Primary School or Academy with Nursery Class	62	5	3	70
Other Maintained School or Academy	28	0	3	31
Maintained Nursery School	29	0	1	30
Eligible Child Minder	197	1	8	206
Other	12	2	0	14
Totals	433	8	18	459
	94%	2%	4%	

Key themes to emerge from the responses including:

- Thanks, agree, welcome the proposals;
- Proposals not enough to cover the actual costs, or discussion of wider costs/impact;
- A different methodology should be used:
 - especially childminders suggesting equal payments,
 - size criteria
 - recognition of opening periods/working through lockdowns;
 - related to closures for self-isolation.
- Request for the proposals to cover settings not in receipt of DSG funding;
- Small number of comments not supporting the proposals at all.

Members discussed the responses and the proposed rationale and allocations/

The Forum

- a) **Noted the report and the consultation analysis and comments;**
- b) **Unanimously supported the proposal for a one-off lump sum payment to be made in the spring term 2021 of £250 for childminders and £1,000 for other early years providers, to assist with covid related costs.**

Members noted that the county council would need to submit what is known as a 'disapplication' request to the DfE. This request would need to seek the agreement of the Secretary of State to disapply the regulations and change budget allocations in-year by making the one-off Covid allocation.

- ***Additional funding for the whole of the next financial year***

The Forum noted that recommendations for the transfer of £2m Schools Block headroom to Early Years Block in 2021/22 had been included in Schools Budget report.

ii. **SEN Inclusion Fund**

Following concerns raised at the last meeting, the Chair wrote to the Inclusion Service expressing concerns about inclusion related matters. Subsequently, the Chair, plus a small group of other representatives, have met with the Inclusion Service colleagues to discuss the issue raised.

Members also asked if there was any feedback from the OfSTED SEND inspection of the Authority, to which some colleagues had contributed and officers agreed to check with Inclusion Service colleagues.

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Welcomed the actions from the meeting with Inclusion Service colleagues;*
- c) *Requested that the Group be kept informed of developments.*

The Forum:

- a) **Supported the working group's recommendations;**
- b) **Noted that further information about the OfSTED SEND inspection had been provided for members.**

iii. Take-up of Funded Places.

Information was shared with the group analysing the take-up of funded places in Lancashire. Figures showed a reduction in the take-up of 2 year old places in the county and further analysis revealed some significant variations on a district by district basis.

Officers explained that a number of initiatives were being developed to promote further take-up, both county wide, and targeted at districts with the lowest take-up.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the information;*
- b) *Welcomed the initiatives being developed to increase take-up, including the coordination of promotional messages using settings communication channels.*

The Forum:

- a) **Supported the working group's recommendations.**

11. URGENT BUSINESS

No decisions have been taken using the Forum urgent business procedure since the last meeting.

12. FORUM CORRESPONDENCE

A report was presented providing information on the Forum related correspondence received since the last meeting:

a) Correspondence to the Secretary of State

As requested by the Forum at the meeting of 20 October 2020, the Chair wrote to the Secretary of State for Education making representations about the covid-19 costs being borne by school and early years providers in the county and seeking additional DSG resources to help continue to deliver education in Lancashire in a Covid safe environment. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools also sent similar correspondence.

The Forum has received a very generic reply from the DfE in response to the letter, however a later response had been sent to the Cabinet Member from Nick Gibb, Minister of State for Schools.

b) Correspondence from Education Mutual

Correspondence has been received from Educational Mutual about the possibility of offering Staff Absence Protection in Lancashire. The correspondence included an initial letter and some further details in the form of 2 information brochures.

Members considered the correspondence received.

The Forum:

a) Noted the correspondence received.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

i. Edenred FSM system in term time

An extract from the covid bulletin was shared with the Forum about term time FSM vouchers from Edenred and it was noted that schools would be charged for any vouchers ordered for term-time.

Discussion of DfE guidance and the quality of some food parcels took place.

The Forum noted the report.

ii. School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

A draft supply scheme update for January 2021 was provided, which responded to the latest lockdown requirements on schools for supply cover.

The Forum supported the January 2021 Supply Scheme update.

iii. Schools Forum response to Covid-19

A paper setting out the Schools Forum response to Covid-19 was provided for consideration.

Key responses included:

- Supported arrangements for redeterminations in the spring and summer terms 2020 to protect early years providers at historic levels where headcount was reduced by the impact of covid-19
- Other assistance for early years providers including double funding in summer term where child's usual setting was closed, larger upfront interim payments to help cashflow, and waiving of some charges for the sector
- Supported arrangements for redeterminations in the spring and summer terms 2020 to protect high needs block providers at historic levels where census data was reduced by the impact of covid-19
- Supported numerous in year revisions to the Lancashire supply scheme arrangements to respond to changing government advice on covid-19, including, under certain circumstances, covering staff who are self isolation or clinically extremely vulnerable
- Wrote to the Secretary of State and DfE making representations about the covid response on behalf of Lancashire schools and early years providers
- Supported the allocation of a covid payment to Lancashire early years providers
- Underwritten the additional costs of the support through the DSG reserve
- Supported LCC position on school staff absences, where parents need to care for their own children asked to isolate

- Supported the remote delivery of the traded school finance package

The Forum noted the report.

iv. Early Years and High Needs Spring Term Redeterminations

Further information from DfE on early years funding and high needs pupil counts and was awaited.

The Forum noted the report.

14. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00am Thursday 18 2021 at County Hall, Preston, subject to COVID-19 implications.

A schedule of Forum meetings for the academic year 2021/22 was provided for consideration.

Views were also sought about whether members would prefer virtual meetings to continue (if allowable) even when things return to more normal.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the report;**
- b) Expressed a preference for a blended approach to virtual meetings.**