

LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 10:00 A.M. ON THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2022
(Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams)**

Present:

Schools Members:

Primary School Governors

Stephen Booth
Gerard Collins
Laurence Upton
Karen Stracey
Tim Young

Primary School Headteachers

Angela Aspinwall-Livesey
Daniel Ballard
Jenny Birkin
Neil Gurman
Deanne Marsh
Michelle O'Neill
Anna Smith
Keith Wright
Mike Wright

Secondary School Governors

Janice Astley
John Davey
Gill Donohoe
Brian Rollo

Secondary School Headteachers

Steve Campbell
Mike Wright

Nursery School Headteacher

Jan Holmes

Nursery School Governor

Thelma Cullen

Early Years - PVI

Peter Hindle
Sharon Fenton
Philippa Perks

Academy Governor

Chris McConnachie
Helen Dicker
Louise Shaw

Academy Principal/Headteacher

James Keulemans
Alan Porteous
John Tarbox

Alternative Provision Academy

Holly Clarke

Special School Academy

Louise Parrish

Special School Governor

Mandy Howarth

Special School Headteacher

Shaun Jukes – Forum Chair
Claire Thompson

Short Stay Governor

Liz Laverty

Short Stay Headteacher

Members:

Other Voting Members

Bill Mann

Observers

Christopher Anderson (NEU)
CC Michael Goulthorp
Sam Ud-din (LASGB)
Nicola Whyte

In attendance: Paul Bonser
Matt Dexter
Millie Dixon
Emma Nicholson
Sally Richardson
Kevin Smith
Howard Walsh

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Sarah Barton, Julie Bell, Kathleen Cooper, Matt Eastham, Rosie Fearn, Gaynor Gorman, Neil Gurman, CC Jane Rear, Sarah Robson and Robert Waring.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Substitute members were welcomed to the meeting:

- CC Michael Goulthorp attended for CC Jane Rear

2. FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Since the last meeting, two primary school governors have resigned from the Forum.

- Karen Stephens
- Chris Bagguley.

Also, on 8 March 2022, the LA emailed school and early years members of the Forum, as part of the annual membership review, to ascertain if individuals wish to continue to serve on the Forum in the next academic year commencing in September 2022. Responses were requested by Friday 1st April 2022.

The Forum:

- a) Note the report;**
- b) Thanked Karen Stephens and Chris Bagguley for their contributions to the Forum.**

Individual members are asked to complete the annual membership eform by the deadline if they have not already done so.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 13 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

- *Team Around the School and Setting (TASS)*

It was noted that TASS colleagues had been unable to attend this meeting of the Forum, as they had commitments elsewhere in the county at the same time.

Members asked that a TASS representative be invited to the next meeting of the Forum and also requested that feedback be provided to the service that the TASS website information was not up to date.

- *School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme*

Following discussions at the Schools Forum, individual supply scheme offers were issued on the portal on 21 January 2022 and final confirmation letters were issued on 8 March 2022 confirming the cover, if any, that schools have chosen from 1 April 2022.

- *School Feedback on Covid Catch Up*

Feedback from the working groups about covid catch-up funding was included in the report presented to the LCC Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on 22 February 2022. The Committee will continue to monitor the impact of grants on outcomes for young people in Lancashire.

- *Indexation of teachers pensions*

Following on from the issue raised at the last meeting about the impact of the pay freeze this year on the indexation of teachers pensions, and options around providing a £1 pay rise to trigger the indexation, it was noted that the LCC HR advice reported to schools was not to undertake these mechanisms due to the risks involved. At the Forum, some individual schools representatives indicated that their governing bodies had decided to proceed with the mechanism of increasing staff pay by the £1, based on advice from teacher unions.

The Forum did not express a view but indicated that this was a matter for individual school governing bodies to consider for their own circumstances.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the matters arising.**

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCHOOLS BLOCK WORKING GROUP

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group held on 3 March 2022.

i. Schools Block Budget 2022/23

At the Schools Forum on 13 January 2022, decisions and recommendations about the 2022/23 Schools Budget were agreed, and on 20 January 2022, the County Council's Cabinet formally approved the Schools Budget for 2021/22.

The Authority Proforma Tool (APT), setting out the agreed Schools Block proposals for 2022/23, was then submitted to the ESFA for compliance checking ahead of the 21 January 2022 deadline.

The ESFA subsequently contacted the LA seeking a small number of clarifications and explanations and once satisfied with the responses provided approval, which was received on 15 February 2022.

In addition, the DfE approved the disapplication submission relating to the MFG protection for the secondary school associated with the loss of the 2021/22 PFI allocation.

School Budgets were prepared and issued on 21 February 2022, together with forecast High Needs Block allocations.

For 2022/23, the DfE are calculating the PPG allocations on the basis of October school census data, rather than the January school census. This means that actual PPG information will be available much sooner. The LA did not therefore include an indicative PPG statement with the budget notifications.

It is anticipated that DfE will publish PPG allocations shortly

Schools Supplementary Grant 2022/23

As reported to the last meeting of the Schools Forum, the Chancellor announced an additional £1.6bn funding for schools and high needs, for the 2022/23 financial year, above the previous Dedicated Schools Grant settlement. For mainstream schools, this funding will be allocated through a schools supplementary grant 2022/23.

DfE announcements indicate that school-level allocations of the schools supplementary grant for 2022/23 will be published in spring 2022, On 28 February 2022, DfE published a Schools Supplementary Grant calculator tool, which enable mainstream schools to estimate the grant allocation they are likely to receive in 2022/23. The calculator is available [here](#)

DSG Funding Adjustment 2023/24

The County Council has also made further representations to the DfE requesting that the DSG allocations for Lancashire for 2023/24 are adjusted to reflect the permanent change of use of the former Hameldon PFI site, which is now being utilised by a special school. We have therefore requested a £1.9m transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block, so that the contractual school PFI contribution can be met from the correct funding block. Following further dialogue with DfE colleagues, the LA is now preparing a formal submission to the ESFA/DfE requesting the permanent transfer of the £1.9m transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block in response to the change of the use of the former Hameldon site to a special school and the requirement for future PFI contributions to be made from the High Needs Block.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*
- b) *Supported the submission to DfE for a permanent transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block of £1.9m from 2023/24*

The Forum unanimously supported the submission to DfE for a permanent transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block of £1.9m from 2023/24.

ii. Request for Clawback Exemption for a Lancashire Primary School in 2022/23

In July 2021, the Forum considered the School Balances and Clawback Policy for 2021/22.

It was agreed that the clawback of excess balances would be suspended in 2021/22 and no clawback would be applied to school balances at 31 March 2022. This clawback

suspension was in recognition of the continued funding and expenditure uncertainties caused by COVID-19.

Furthermore, the Forum indicated that it was likely that clawback would be reintroduced on school balances above the guideline at 31 March 2023 but agreed that this policy would be reviewed in July 2022, in light of the 2021/22 outturn data, any ongoing COVID-19 issues or any other implications, before it was confirmed.

At this point, the financial planning assumptions for Lancashire maintained schools will include the reintroduction of clawback in FY 2022/23. This has raised a particular issue for one Lancashire primary school and the views of the working group were sought on a request to exempt the school from clawback at 31 March 2023, if Forum ultimately agree to confirm clawback reintroduction.

The school in question is based on an army barracks in the county. This presents some peculiar challenges for the school, especially as and when the army changes the troops posted at the barracks, as this can mean that a significant proportion of the school's pupils leave en masse and then later a similar number of pupils are enrolled as a new regiment moves in.

Information about the planned troop movements at the barracks and the financial implications were shared with the working group.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Recommended that the Forum agree to exempt the Lancashire primary school from clawback at 31 March 2023 due to the circumstances set out in the report.*

The Forum ratified the working group's recommendations.

iii. Inclusion Hub Funding 2022/23

Following a consultation with schools in the autumn term 2021, the Forum again voted to de-delegate funding for primary inclusion hubs in 2022/23. The de-delegation cost was held at the 2021/22 rate of £11.00 per pupil for maintained primary schools and generates circa £1m for inclusion hub activities in Lancashire.

Following an initial year of Inclusion Hub funding allocated on a 'pump priming' basis of £80k per district in 2019/20, the distribution methodology has used pupil numbers and a deprivation factor to calculate the allocations for each district. For 2022/23, it was proposed to continue this methodology and the information on the allocations calculated for each district from April 2022 was provided.

Further updates will be presented to the Forum in due course about the operation of the hubs, and the Forum will need to make formal decisions in October 2022 about de-delegation options for 2023/24.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the continued use of the NOR plus deprivation methodology for distributing de-delegated funding to inclusion hubs in 2022/23.*

The Forum ratified the working group's recommendations.

iv. School Business Rates

Schools Block School Business Rates Arrangements 2022/23

Information has been provided previously for members about revised arrangements for school business rates from April 2022.

There are still a number of details about how the new rates system will work yet to be finalised by the government. However, a key issue has recently arisen where it appears that the government will not enforce the new system on billing authorities in 2022/23, leaving the decision with each relevant authority about whether to opt into the system or opt out.

In Lancashire, the district councils are the billing authorities and we do not yet have any confirmation about the intentions of these councils.

Recent feedback from the Estates Team indicates that initial responses from some Lancashire billing authorities is that they will not be opting in to the DfE's revised billing arrangements from April 2022, meaning that the rates system is likely to remain as it operated in 2021/22 for many schools. This would involve schools and academies paying the relevant business rates bills from their local billing authority. This is because the latest information suggests that all the billing authorities in our county would need to opt into the revised billing system for the new arrangements to go live, but we are awaiting final confirmation of this.

Bid to the Rate Reimbursement Policy

The Schools Forum has agreed a rate reimbursement policy. The future of the policy will need to be clarified in light of the final school business rate arrangements applicable in Lancashire from April 2022, but the existing policy will remain active until 31 March 2022, at least.

The rates reimbursement policy requires schools to submit a business case in year to the authority, where the actual in year costs incurred by a school is greater than budgeted and the difference is greater 1% of the Total Schools Block Budget Share for the same funding period or £5,000.

To date, this policy has only reimbursed school block funded schools, as this is the only local funding formulae with a rates factor included. However, the LA has recently received a request to consider a reimbursement to a maintained nursery school.

The school has recently received an additional rates bill for £19,548. The bill followed a revaluation carried out by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) in October 2021 and relates to an extra modular building on the school site, with the charge backdated to June 2018 when the additional building was completed.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported an allocation of £19,548 being made from the Rate Reimbursement Policy to a Lancashire nursery school due to the circumstances described in the report.*

Subsequent to the working group meeting, the DfE confirmed that Lancashire billing authorities have decided not to introduce the new system in 2022/23 This means that schools should continuing with the existing payment processes where they pay their rates bill directly to their local council

This late change by the Government to the rates arrangements should have a limited impact on school budgets, as it simply continues the existing process and rates funding has been included in 2022/23.

Rates billing arrangements for schools funded from the High Needs Block and Early Years Block should also continue as they were in 2021/22.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the report and the further information provided;
- b) Ratified the working group's recommendations;
- c) confirmed the continuation of the Rates Reimbursement Policy into 2022/23, so that protection can continue for schools receiving larger rates bills than they received funding, subject to certain thresholds and the submission of a business case.

v. **Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded**

A verbal update was provided to confirm information shared with the Schools Forum at the January 2022 meeting. Previous reports to the Forum set out information on DfE proposals around 'Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded', which included a Forum response to the Government's consultation exercise.

The Lancashire grant allocation for 2021/22 equated to just under £2m and DfE proposals indicated that this would be reduced by 50% in 2022/23, potentially leaving a £1m shortfall in school improvement funding from April 2022.

The LA is still considering the implications of this grant cut and further information will be provided in due course.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the information.*

The Forum noted the report.

7. 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 1 March 2022.

A supplementary item is also included, which emerged after the working group meeting, and relates to Teachers' Pay Grant (TPG) and Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) allocations.

i. School Census data – special school termly redeterminations

Following recommendations at the last working group, Forum special school members kindly circulating a request via LASSTHA for pupil number information at special schools to be completed on a LCC eform, in addition to school census, in order to facilitate timely termly redeterminations.

The LA has chased outstanding returns after the deadline and all but 2 schools have now responded. The LA aims to issue redeterminations in w/c 7 March 2022 and will use last terms data for these schools if they do not reply. Even though deadline has passed, the LA confirmed that it would be able to include their numbers if they were submitted by 4 March 2022.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the report.

At the Forum meeting it was confirmed that spring term redeterminations have been calculated and issued.

The Forum noted the report.

ii. High Needs Block Funding 2022/23

This information and associated recommendations had been covered in the Schools Block report.

iii. High Needs Supplementary Grant 2022/23

At the Schools Forum on 19 January 2022, information was provided about the Schools Supplementary Grant. The Grant allocation will include a government calculated element for mainstream schools, with £325m of the national total targeted for high needs funding, to be allocated locally, following discussion with the Schools Forum.

Following discussions with the Forum, it was agreed that the High Needs Supplementary Grant would be calculated in two parts:

- Health and Social Care Levy (Increased NI contribution in 2022/23 for social care)
 - Provided specifically to support special schools and PRUs;
 - To be calculated on 80% of total budget per school x 1.25% based on 2022/23 School Budget data;
 - This should broadly reflect the additional costs for the HNB schools, as circa 80% of total budgets are staffing and the employer NI contribution is increasing by 1.25%;
 - Prevents the need for extensive extra work and complex calculations;
 - Contribution for other schools included within mainstream grant;
 - Consideration of exceptional expansion at special schools and data point used regarding WPN values due to differentials between terms.
- Wider Cost Pressures
 - Uses remaining Grant, of circa £5.2m;
 - Paid across all sectors as one off payment or instalments;
 - Calculated on basis of WPNs in 2022/23 School Budget data;
 - For AP incorporates Excluded, Medical & Other Places + WPN above E2 (1.00 WPN);

- Equates to circa £600 per WPN, subject to confirmation of final allocations and distribution methodology.

Whilst the overall principles of the methodology were agreed by Forum in January 2022, the details of how the 'Consideration of authority commissioned expansions at special schools and the data point used regarding WPN values due to differentials between terms' in the calculations need to be finalised.

Having considered the issues, the following information was put forward for consideration:

- For special schools with authority commissioned expansions planned from the academic year 2022/23 due to LA projects, the 2022/23 School Budget data to be used in the NI increase calculation already has the revised September 2022 place numbers built into the budget for the place funding. The existing methodology is therefore already recognising an element of the additional costs that the schools will face in September 2022. However, the budget figures will not take account of the impact the additional pupils will have on the WPN figures or school specific calculations. It is therefore proposed to calculate the average costs per place at relevant schools based on the 2022/23 budget figures and multiply this by the increased number of places at September 2022. The 80% x 1.25% calculation will then be applied, to provide an estimate of the additional NI burden on these schools arising from the extra commissioned places that was not recognised in the standard Health and Social Care Levy calculation.

The calculation applied to 4 schools where LA commissioned expansions are taking places from September 2022 and is estimated to cost just over £4k in total. This will not substantially impact on the estimated overall costs of this element of the methodology, with the total calculation rising to marginally over £0.8m.

- In response to the WPN data point to be used in the methodology, the original proposal planned to use the Schools Budget 2022/23 data, which is taken from the October 2021 census.

An alternative solution would be to use May census data in the WPN calculations. The Summer term census is traditionally the high point in the academic year for pupil number/WPN values, especially for PRUs. The latest summer term data available before the start of the 2022/23 financial year is from May 2021. The high level WPN data was provided on both the October 2021 and May 2021 data:

The revised estimate of the High Needs Supplementary Grant for Lancashire is £6.2m, leaving circa £5.4m available for the wider costs pressures element of the methodology. The October 2021 data would therefore equate to circa £599 per WPN, with the May 2021 data providing circa £630 per WPN.

It was noted that the October 2021 data contains a larger number of WPNs overall, so reduces the value to be paid for each WPN. The May 2021 data contains a lower number of WPNs overall, so the factor can be increased proportionately. May 2021 data does however provide a higher WPN figure for PRUs.

The final WPN figures will also provide an adjustment for the special schools subject to the LA commissioned expansions, similar to that described above, but

without the NI percentage element, which will also impact on the final WPN factor to be allocated.

Members considered the proposals for distributing the High Needs Supplementary Funding and discussed the various options available. There was general agreement for a preference for the May 2021 census data to be used for the WPN calculations. However, members wanted to consult further with colleagues and officers before final decisions were taken, with some concern expressed about the possible adjustment methodology to post 16 commissioned place numbers in the authority commissioned expansions element of the arrangements. The need to use a single data point for calculations and have a methodology that could be applied across all sectors and settings was emphasised.

Officers asked that members hold discussions/collate any views by 17 March 2022 if possible, so that final decisions can be agreed at Forum, in time to implement payments from April 2022.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the use of May 2021 census data in the WPN calculation of the High Needs Supplementary Grant methodology;*
- c) *Representatives agreed to consult further with colleagues and officers before final decisions were taken about the possible adjustment methodology.*

Feedback received from following the working group meeting indicate that the chair of the working group special school heads after the working group on 1st March and asked for any comments or concerns. Only 1 school responded seeking to clarify their position Therefore assuming that the others are OK with the high needs supplementary grant proposed arrangements in respect of post16.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the report and the further information provided;**
- b) **Ratified the working group's recommendations.**

iv. Teachers' Pay Grant (TPG) and Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) Allocations

After the Working Group meeting, a High Needs Block issue has arisen, and information is included in this report for consideration by the Forum.

This issue relates to Teachers' Pay Grant (TPG) and Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) Allocations.

The LA has been in discussion with an AP provider about the payment of TPG and TPECG in 2021/22. This has caused the LA to re-examine the DfE's High Needs Guidance for 2021/22.

Members will recall that for 2021/22 the DfE included funding in High Needs Block allocations to LAs that had previously been distributed via 2 specific grants to cover the costs of teachers pay and pension increases. Following discussions with the Forum, this additional funding was allocated to special schools/academies and PRUs/AP providers in Lancashire via an addition to the school specific factor in both formulae, at a rate of £660

per pupil. As the extra £660 was included in the school specific element of the formulae, it related to the pupil count and was redetermined each term.

Having reviewed the situation, the LA is now of the view that this methodology does not fully comply with the DfE guidance/conditions of grant, which specify that the allocations should be based on 'DfE funded places' and also incorporates a minimum payment threshold of 40 places.

As the original allocations did not fully comply with the conditions of grant, the LA will need to analyse the allocations to determine adjustments.

The 2021/22 High Needs Block TPG and TPECG funding has been recalculated using the 'place' methodology, with some 18 schools/PRUs generating higher allocations and 21 resulting in lower allocations.

As this issue has emerged so late in the 2021/22 financial year it would be inappropriate to reduce allocations for schools where the place methodology generates a lower amount, so the LA intends to honour the original allocations.

For those schools with higher place methodology allocations, a supplementary allocation will be issued shortly, to ensure that the allocations from the corrected amounts can be included in the 2021/22 year end accounts. The largest increase for a special school is circa £23k, and for a PRU, circa £14k.

Members will recall that Forum has already agreed that no clawback mechanism should be applied on school balances at 31 March 2022, so this late allocation does not create any clawback issue for schools.

The costs of the payments to the 18 schools entitled to the higher allocation under the place methodology, plus the original AP provider that raised the query, is just over £200,000.

2022/23 TPG and TPECG Allocations

The 2022/23 HNB guidance and conditions of grant contain similar TPG and TPECG requirements. However, as the correction of 2021/22 allocations has only recently been finalised, the original 2022/23 special school and PRU budget statements, issued on 21 February 2022, included TPG and TPECG allocations calculated on the 'school specific' methodology.

The LA will need to recalculate these 2022/23 allocations to ensure compliance with DSG conditions of grant, however, as the 2022/23 financial year has not yet commenced, the Forum's views were now sought on the options available. Options could be:

- Revise funding models, recalculating the TPG and TPECG allocations for 2022/23 and issue revised budget statements to all special schools and PRUs and, as the new financial year has not yet commenced, expect the schools to factor the revised allocations into their 2022/23 individual school budget proposals.
- Inform all special schools and PRUs of the revised calculations, however, as 2022/23 budget statements have already been issued, then honour allocations that would be lower, and increase allocations that are higher using the 'place' methodology. Uplifted 2022/23 allocations would need to be calculated and paid

in March 2023, but initial estimates suggest that around half the schools would again be eligible for higher allocations, with a total amount of circa £200k to be underwritten by the DSG reserve.

2023/24 TPG and TPECG Allocations

The LA will update the 2023/24 HNB funding models to incorporate the TPG and TPECG place based allocation methodology after reviewing updated DfE high needs guidance for 2023/24.

It was confirmed that since papers were issued, 2021/22 adjustments have been allocated to relevant schools.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the report;**
- b) **Recommended that the option to honour the Teachers' Pay Grant (TPG) and Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) allocations that would be lower and increase allocations that are higher using the 'place' methodology in 2022/23.**

8. 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 8 March 2022.

i. Early Years Block Funding 2022/23

At the Schools Forum on 13 January 2022, decisions and recommendations about the 2022/23 Schools Budget were agreed.

In connection with the Early Years Block, the Forum unanimously supported the 2022/23 Early Years Block proposals that had been recommended by the working group. On 20 January 2022, the County Council's Cabinet formally approved the Schools Budget for 2021/22.

Some elements of the Schools Budget require compliance checking by the ESFA and approval was received on 15 February 2022.

Early Years budget statements for 2022/23 were prepared and issued on 21 February 2022.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum noted the report.

ii. Impact on Early Years settings on EEF as a percentage of total sales EEF Early Education Funding

A presentation was considered about the impact on Early Years settings of EEF Early Education Funding as a percentage of total sales, which had been prepared by the working group chair.

The presentation provided information on the Costs and Income changes in Early Years settings. The analysis indicated that for 2022/23 there would be a 7.1% increase in

costs but only a 3.5% increase in government funding. Further analysis was shared assessing the impact for settings depending on their percentage of EEF compared to their total income and on the historic comparison of funding rises compared to cost pressures.

A summary of the impact included:

- Settings with a high percentage of EEF can't increase parent fees to cover government shortfall.
- Under 2's and all other parents paying fees are subsidising the shortfall in EEF.
- The low level of government EEF increase means that most settings are going to be short of income.
- Whole sector is experiencing huge increase in children with SEND etc where settings need unfunded extra staff but cannot obtain or afford them.
- Many settings are not making a surplus.
- Make cost reductions or charge more for extras to stay in business.

Members discussed the ongoing problem of underfunding in the sector and compared this to Wales where rates were increasing to £5 per hour from April 2022, plus £9 per day towards meals. There was also full remission of business rates for early years providers.

Concern was expressed that the level of funding provided by the Government would soon begin to reduce the quality of provision in the county. Currently 98% of Lancashire providers were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, but this would be unsustainable if funding were not significantly increased.

Officers, in consultation with the Working Group Chair, planned to send a letter from the county council to Lancashire MPs to highlight the underfunding for the sector, and it was also agreed that this matter would again be raised at the regular sessions the county council held with the DfE.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Expressed significant concern about the underfunding of the early years sector in Lancashire and the inevitable impact this would have on the quality of provision;*
- c) Supported the actions to raise awareness of this funding issues further with MPs and DfE.*

The Forum ratified the working group's recommendations.

i. LCC Family Safeguarding model

The Federation of Lancashire Nursery Headteachers had asked that an issue could be raised at the Schools' Forum on the role of Early Years settings in the LCC Family Safeguarding model.

In the Family Safeguarding model Early Help and Support is provided by settings. This has brought additional workload, particularly for those settings located in areas of deprivation providing education for Lancashire's most vulnerable children. Early Years settings are already stretched, often working precisely on ratio. There is no funding for Early Years settings to cover the additional workload. Although other sectors may also feel the pressure of providing Early Help and Support, they receive considerably more in Pupil Premium to be able to provide the necessary family support.

Headteachers have said that school staff are increasingly being allocated as the Lead Professional. The feeling is that this is a family support worker role, but most schools don't have that post, and can't afford to create that post, so it falls on the headteacher/DSL. Settings in areas of high deprivation will see more families requiring support due to the effects of deprivation. Covid has worsened the stresses on families which further increase the workload.

The issue is very similar to that previously raised by the PVI sector.

It was noted that settings are fully supportive of the Family Safeguarding model because they have the children's best interests at heart but would welcome consideration of the issues by Schools Forum.

All members recognised the concerns that were highlighted, and officers agreed to arrange a meeting with the Head of Service for Child Protection/Children in Need (Family Safeguarding) to directly discuss the issues raised.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the proposed meeting with LCC officers to directly discuss the issues raised.*

The Forum ratified the working group's recommendations.

ii. SEN in Early Years

A further issue was raised about the level of funding available in the sector to support children with SEN.

Members reported that the situation they faced was getting increasingly worse as more children presented with SEN after the pandemic and funding generally was already stretched.

It was noted that Lancashire passported all the early years funding received from the government to Lancashire providers and that increases in the SEN Inclusion Fund for example would reduce funding available for base rates.

Officers confirmed that it was intended to consult the sector ahead of the 2023/24 financial year to obtain feedback about the balance of factors in the Lancashire early years formula and these views could influence decisions about future funding arrangements.

A more general survey of the sector was also to be issued shortly to obtain feedback from the sector and this would include feedback about the SEN pressures on settings.

Members were aware that a subgroup held regular meetings with Inclusion Service colleagues, and it was proposed that the invitation to the next meeting of this group could be extended to the wider Working Group membership to enable colleagues to hear directly from the service and discuss options available. Feedback was provided that a service restructure was underway and early years officers had been involved in the recruitment process to ensure appointees had relevant early years experience and focus. The possibility of future use of High Needs Block funding to support the pressures on SEN children in the sector was raised and it was noted that discussion with the Inclusion Service would be needed first to formulate any policy considerations.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the concerns raised about the pressures on SEN funding in the sector;*
- c) *Supported the wider invitation to the next SEN Inclusion meeting to facilitate wider discussions with the service.*

The Forum ratified the working group's recommendations.

iii. Childminders and Covid rules

Information was provided about the current Covid rules for childminders which include

- A childminder can accept a child with Covid into their home
- A parent with Covid can come to the home to drop off their child
- If the childminder or a household member has Covid they have to close
- But the household member can still go to work or school
- The childminder does not need to self-isolate
- This only applies to childminders and not other EY settings.

The LA has raised the inconsistencies in this guidance with the DfE.

The DfE response was shared with the working group and the response did add that the DfE is aware of the issue and discussions are ongoing with UKHSA with an update expected for 1 April.

Officers confirmed that there were some temporary workarounds available for childminders but that these were not that easy to action and had not been taken up in Lancashire.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum ratified the working group's recommendations.

iv. PVI Deprivation rates for 22/23

At the Forum meeting, a verbal report was provided about an issue that had emerged with the deprivation factor on PVI budget statements, where incorrect data had been supplied for use in the calculation.

Analysis (which was subject to final confirmation) suggested that when the factor is recalculated using correct data, 503 of 934 providers have a changed deprivation rate.

Using the correct data added circa £225k to 250k the EY block budget forecast (this is the correct figure that would have been included in the approved budget forecast had it been available).

The LA will contact providers affected by the change and include details of their specific rate change.

Feedback from the Forum was sought on the principle to be applied to the correction.

- Option 1: Simply apply the correct data meaning that the deprivation forecast for 503 settings will change, either up or down.
- Option 2: Use the corrected calculation for settings where the value of the deprivation factor will increase but honour the original deprivation level where the corrected data results in a reduction. This would protect 159 settings for 2022/23 only . The cost of the protection is estimated at between circa £70k and £80k, which would be underwritten by the DSG reserve.

Members considered the information and supported the use of option 2, to honour the original deprivation level where the corrected data results in a reduction. It was note that this was the principle that had been applied to the teachers pay and pensions calculation in the high needs block

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information provided;**
- b) Supported the use of option 2, to honour the original deprivation level where the corrected data results in a reduction.**

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHAIRS' WORKING GROUP

A verbal report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Chairs' Working Group meeting held on 17 March 2022.

i. Bid to Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) for one off financial support

Information was provided about a SIFD bid relating to a Lancashire primary school that has fallen into a deficit budget. A number of issues have contributed to the deficit position, but a significant factor has been the cost of the nursery classes at the school.

In response to the deficit, the school has been working with the county council to improve the financial position of the school.

A recovery plan has been agreed by the school management and governors, and incorporates a number of components, which were shared with the group.

In addition, a key factor in the recovery plan related to the closure of the maintained nursery provision on the site, which is a financial drain on the school budget. The recovery plan forecast savings from this would accrue from December 2021, but due to delays outside of its control the earliest implementation date is now estimated to be Easter 2022.

The rescheduling of this element of the recovery plan has impacted on the financial position of the school and due to the lack of resources in the LA to progress the closure, has delayed savings of circa £22k.

Based on the information supplied, the LA believes that a contribution of £22,000 from the Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) budget, to support the school in closing the nursery provision would be appropriate. This would be subject to the normal SIFD bid conditions that the school commit to a recovery plan that shows the school will achieve an overall balanced budget within 3 years.

As at 31 March 2021, the outturn position of the school was a deficit of (£83,816). The £22,000 SIFD bid is therefore well within the maximum bid level of 33% of the relevant deficit.

The Chairs' Group:

a) Noted the information provided;

b) Recommended the allocation of £22,000 from the Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) budget for a Lancashire primary school in deficit.

The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

No matters of urgent business have been considered since the last meeting.

11. FORUM CORRESPONDENCE

A report was presented about the Forum related correspondence received since the last meeting.

i. Correspondence from a Lancashire Special School

At the last Forum meeting in January 2022, correspondence from the Chair of Governors at a Lancashire special school was reported. The letter related to the implementation of a 'damage policy' in connection to 'children looked after' that attend the school.

Following discussions with the Forum Chair and officers, it was judged that decisions about the application of the policy were a matter for the county council, as corporate parent for the 'children looked after' and a response was sent to the Chair of Governors (CoG) to confirm that the correspondence had been forwarded on to county council relevant officers to consider a response.

Officers subsequently looked into the matter and held a meeting with the Headteacher and CoG of the school. Correspondence from Edwina Grant OBE was then sent to the school.

A letter from Edwina was also sent to the Forum Chair setting out the outcome of the discussions.

ii. Correspondence from the Cabinet Member for Education & Skills

After the Forum meeting on 19 January 2022, the Forum Chair wrote to the Cabinet Member for Education & Skills and the Leader of the County Council, setting out the Forum's decisions and recommendations regarding the Schools Budget 2022/23. This correspondence formed part of the County Council Cabinet's consideration of the Schools Budget on 20 January 2022.

A letter, dated 21 January 2022, was received by the Forum Chair from County Councillor Jayne Rear, Cabinet Member for Education & Skills. A copy of the letter is provided at Appendix A to the report, which thanked Shaun for his correspondence and asked that the thanks of the Cabinet Member and the Leader be passed on to all members of the Forum for their hard work to help set the budget this year.

The letter confirmed that the Cabinet had accepted the Forum's recommendations when setting the Schools Budget for 2022/23.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the correspondence.**

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Ukraine Refugees

A matter of AOB was raised by Brian Rollo asking if the County Council was aware of any refugees arriving in Lancashire from Ukraine and if so, how any influx of children may be handled? The AOB had been notified ahead of the meeting and enquiries have been made to the relevant LCC

The response indicated that at this point the county council do not know how many Ukrainian refugees might arrive in Lancashire. The Government had issued some details of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The scheme is uncapped, so there is no limit on the number of refugees who might arrive. LCC are expecting that additional funding will be provided so that wrap around support can be provided to families, but at this point guidance on the role of local authorities and partners has not been published.

LCC is aware that, dependent on the numbers of families who arrive in Lancashire, there will be pressures in our communities and services, including access to education, that may mean we have to reimagine what is able to be delivered. The Refugee Integration Team has initial planning meetings with county council services, including children's services, to begin to establish how we can best provide support as a whole system.

b) Teacher Training (QTS) using the Apprenticeship Levy- last call for applications!

Following the report from the Apprenticeship Levy team at the last meeting, members were reminded that LCC will be starting the programme for new applicants to start on 1 July 2022 with our new delivery partner for 2022, Ripley St Thomas SCITT. Training will take place in central Preston - making it accessible for everyone.

Places for the teacher training apprenticeship will be limited due to the high popularity with this programme, and the closing date for applications is 31 March 2022. Any interested members were asked to contact james.beardwood@lancashire.gov.uk.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the information provided;**
- b) **Asked to be kept informed about support for Ukrainian refugees.**

13. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00am Tuesday 5 July 2022. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course.