

LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM
Date of meeting 12 January 2023

Item No 6

Title: High Needs Block 'Inclusion Engagement Support Team'

Executive Summary

In the last working group of the High Needs Block, it was reported on 29 November 2022 that a temporary team had been created due to government COVID funds. Inclusion and Engagement Support Team funding will run out in June 2023. During the meeting it was proposed that the High Needs Block continue funding this team. This report will outline the work achieved by this team and how the results will benefit the sector in the long-term.

Recommendations

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the High Needs Block Working Group held on 29 November 2022 requested further information to consider funding the team;**
- b) Ratify the Working Group's request.**

Background

The Inclusion Engagement Support Team was established in September 2021 and funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, which was additional funding made available to local authorities during the Covid pandemic in 2021. This funding runs out in July 2023 and so this team will cease to exist unless it is possible to secure additional funding in the future.

The team comprises three full-time teachers, three and a half full time learning mentors and part-time business support. One of the learning mentor posts has been vacant since June 2022. It has not been possible to recruit to this temporary post for one year. The Council has experienced difficulties in relation to recruitment of staff to permanent posts generally and this becomes more challenging where posts are temporary, particularly where these are for a year or less. Other members of the team are seeking alternative employment due to the uncertainty about the future of this team.

The team was established to provide support for children and young people with education, health and care plans where their mainstream school placement was at risk of breakdown and/or where the child was at risk of permanent exclusion.

The basic model of support is outlined in the diagram below.



More information about the support provided by this team is available via the following link: [Inclusion and Engagement Support Team - Lancashire County Council](#), including the Good Methods of Engagement resources referenced below.

The SEND review: right support, right place, right time green paper published for consultation in March 2022 emphasised the need for better inclusion supported by high quality education and an outreach first approach. At the time of writing the outcomes of this consultation have not been reported, however the strategy being developed in relation to pupils at risk of permanent exclusion in Lancashire is on the development of support within pupils' existing settings. It is anticipated this out-reach support will be targeted at pupils with no or lower-level special educational needs. The Inclusion Engagement Support Team have in many

ways led the way for this approach in Lancashire as all support provided by this team is within the mainstream setting. This contrasts with the approach that is sometimes adopted for pupils without education, health and care plans where support is often provided off site in settings that include for example pupil referral units.

In addition, the Inclusion Engagement Support Team have additional knowledge and expertise in special educational needs, which is not available to the same extent from outreach support practitioners working from the pupil referral units. This specialist knowledge is essential when working with children whose needs are so significant that they require provision to be secured through an education, health and care plan.

This support is particularly important at the current time where suspension and exclusion rates are increasing across Lancashire for children with and without special educational needs. Permanent exclusion rates for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan in Lancashire was 0.04% in 2020/21, which was below the average for all English authorities where the rate was 0.07%. The permanent exclusion rate for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans increased to 0.19% in 2021/22, which equated to 11 pupils. Since September 2022 there have been 12 permanent exclusions of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans. There is no comparative national data after 2020/21. Of these exclusions, 1 was an IEST referral and none had had ongoing direct work. Others had not been referred into the team for support. From this data, we have identified a discrepancy between the number of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan who have been excluded and the number referred to the IEST for support prior to exclusion. On further investigation we identified that many pupils had received several suspensions prior to the exclusion. As a result, the IEST have linked with pupil access to request suspension data is shared so that we can ensure schools are aware of the IEST support offer. Currently, this is in its infancy and would be an area for future development if the IEST were to continue past July 2023 to ensure early identification and action can be taken to support such cases.

Referrals

Since the team was established to December 2022 the team have received 123 referrals from schools for support. Direct support has been provided for 109 children and young people. There were various reasons for support not being provided for the other 14 children which included for example the family moving out of area, a change of placement or where schools were seeking additional evidence to support a change of placement rather than support for the child.

It can be seen from the table below there have been twice as many referrals for primary aged pupils in comparison with those at secondary level and that most pupils referred to the team have social, emotional and mental health needs, closely followed by those with either social, language and communication needs or autism. 20% of referrals in 2021/22 were for pupils in years 6 or 7, although this information is not provided in the table.

Educational phase	Number of pupils	Primary category of need	Number of pupils
Primary	82	SEMH	66
Secondary	41	ASD/SLCN	45
		Other	12

Outcomes

It can be seen from the next table that 72% of pupils that received support from the Inclusion Engagement Support team have been able to maintain their existing placement within a mainstream school.

Outcomes	Number of pupils
Maintained placement	78
Transfer to a special school	18
Other ⁱ	8
Permanent exclusions ⁱⁱ	5

The Inclusion Engagement Support Team have also received written testimonials from schools that have received support from this team, that can be made available on request.

It is also true that between September and the end of November 2022, County Moderating Panel was asked to consider 114 requests for a change of school placement. County Moderating Panel is a multi-agency decision making group that considers applications for independent, non-maintained placements. Just over 65 of the total number of requests made since September have been agreed. The cost of these placements so far is £2.3m per year plus £0.4m for transport. All maintained special schools for children with social, emotional and mental health needs and generic learning difficulties are over-subscribed and therefore often the only option available is a non-maintained special school place where this is not available within the state funded sector. County Moderating Panel has also made referrals to the Inclusion Engagement Support Team where it is considered that a school has not exhausted all the resources that would enable them to maintain the child's placement. This support will not be available if the Inclusion Engagement Support Team does not exist.

The Inclusion Engagement Support Team have also developed a range of resources, referred to as the Good Methods of Engagement (GEMS) that are freely available to all schools. It can be seen from the number of downloads reported below that these have been well received by schools.

Good methods of engagement (GEMS) downloads	Number of page views
gems-autism.pdf	503
gems-adhd.pdf	378
gems-sensory.pdf	340
gems-anger.pdf	323
gems-workstation.pdf	312
gems-anxiety.pdf	300
gems-wellbeing-and-mindfulness.pdf	299
gems-visuals.pdf	291
gems-pre-teach.pdf	260
gems-friendship.pdf	258
gems-attachment.pdf	252
gems-bereavement-and-loss.pdf	243

In addition, and further to requests from schools, a training programme for different practitioners has been developed by the Inclusion and Engagement Support Team. This training programme will run over the spring and summer terms in 2023. This is a targeted programme based on schools' requests and will include for example dedicated courses for teaching assistants and a separate one for teachers. The team are also developing a proposal to provide ongoing supervision via drop-in clinics for practitioners who work directly with this cohort of children. This approach has been found to be particularly successful in the delivery of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants training for schools that has been delivered by educational psychologists in Lancashire for several years.

Finance

The current cost of this team is £253,905, however it is anticipated these costs would increase to £280,040 in 2022/23 with a 5% pay award and £294,042 in 2023/24 with the same pay award.

ⁱ Includes for example those moving out of area, elective home education or transfer to alternative provision

ⁱⁱ No permanent exclusions up until the start of 2022/23 academic year