

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

De-delegation of funding to support Inclusion Hubs was first agreed by the High Needs Block Working Group in October 2019. The purpose of these Inclusion Hubs was to promote inclusion and reduce exclusions in mainstream primary schools through the creation of:

- Local training and collaboration networks
- Local systems for advice and support
- Networks to support inter-district collaboration

It was also anticipated that schools within each district would develop a local response to the particular challenges encountered within their geographical area. It is also the case that different approaches have been adopted to reflect the resources available within a particular district and which included for example support from neighbouring pupil referral units/short stay schools, special schools and other service providers. Schools Forum and District Inclusion Hub leads sought an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Lancashire District Inclusion Hubs in meeting the pre-determined objectives identified above. The project was completed by colleagues within the Educational Psychology teams with support from colleagues across Lancashire, including the head of the Inclusion Service, data services, the Education Improvement team, and colleagues within the District Inclusion Hubs.

### **1.2. The Offer**

A number of the districts have organised and/or are in the process of organising conferences for all primary schools within the district with a view to publicising and involving schools in the development of the offer. These events also provided/provide an opportunity for networking, inter-school support and the sharing of good practice. Some districts have also developed their use of online tools, such as Padlet, to share training resources as well as information about District Inclusion Hub events, the support available via the hub and referral mechanisms.

Most of the District Inclusion Hubs offered training and resources accessible to all schools within a district. These included for example nationally accredited training programmes, with their own evidence bases, such as ELSA and ELKLAN as well as more bespoke training packages targeting specific aspects of development such as social skills or executive functioning. Other training programmes offered focused on methods that could be used to monitor progress and development, or support the identification of approaches to intervention, and which included for example training on the PSED PIVATs or functional behavioural analysis.

Different consultation models were used by districts, either separately or in combination, to assist with the identification of support for individual children by external specialists as well as support

meetings organised across different clusters of schools within a district and less formalised school to school support meetings.

In addition, support was provided for individual pupils in different ways. There were examples of support being offered as part of early intervention with a view to preventing the escalation of need. Other District Inclusion Hubs offered an approach that included a rapid response, often provided by external specialists, where a child/school was considered to be in 'crisis'. The support was provided in different ways that included the observation and assessment of a child by external specialists, which were either provided directly or schools were supported with funding to commission their own.

Graduated packages of support that could include out-reach work were offered by many District Inclusion Hubs, as well as time-limited respite placements in special or short stay schools, where these were available to local schools. Many of the respite placements also included support with reintegration as well as training for staff within the venue of the special or short stay school provider and/or within the originating school.

Some District Inclusion Hubs had developed links with local secondary schools and at least one secondary pupil referral unit was offering support with transition into the secondary phase of education for some of the most vulnerable pupils at the upper end of key stage 2. Much of the support provided at individual pupil level was subsidised to a greater or lesser extent through the funding made available to the District Inclusion Hub. It is also perhaps worth mentioning that academies within at least one of the District Inclusion Hubs contributed directly in order to be able to access the resources and support available. District Inclusion Hubs are generally engaging their own administrative support systems.

District name	Hub
1	Lancaster
2	Wyre
4	Fylde
6	Preston
7	South Ribble
8	West Lancashire
9	Chorley
11	Hyndburn/Ribble Valley
12	Burnley
13	Pendle
14	Rosendale

*Table 1: District name hub correspondence*

### **1.3. Funding**

The £1m de-delegated funding is distributed across the 11 Inclusion Hubs using a weighted model that takes into account the number of pupils on roll in each of the primary schools within, and the level of deprivation across, the district. The relative weighting of each of these factors is 90% for pupil numbers and 10% for deprivation. This approach was also agreed by Schools Forum when the model was first established but does mean that the funding is not equally distributed across the Inclusion Hubs. The average amount of funding per hub is £90.9k and ranges from £47.5k (Flyde) to £142k (Preston).

Currently, 441 primary schools contribute to the financial support of the Inclusion Hub model through the de-delegation of individual school funding. Each school contributes £11 per pupil to make up the £1m that is distributed across the 11 Inclusion Hubs. It should be noted that the amount each school is asked to contribute per pupil has not increased since the introduction of the model.

The average amount of funding de-delegated from each school is £2,200 and the table below provides an estimate of the relative costs of the different types of direct support that is provided via the inclusion hub model. It should be noted, however that not all inclusion hubs offer this level of direct support although most do.

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Cost</b>
PRU placement	£3,250
Reintegration support from PRU to mainstream	£2,000
Educational psychologist	£600 daily
Behaviour specialist	£600 daily
Teaching assistant support	£3,000 half-termly

*Table 2. Intervention costs*

It can be seen the costs associated with intervention placements and additional teaching assistant support exceed the average individual contribution of each school. In addition, the funding required to secure external specialist support would be limited to fewer than four days per child based on the de-delegated funding for each school, which may not be sufficient for the pupils with the most complex needs over time. This approach could be seen then to target support to pupils with the greatest level of need across the whole of the school community in Lancashire. It could also be considered this funding arrangement serves to support fluctuations in need across schools and this is important because level and complexity of need varies over time.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Data collection**

Data was collected from:

- the evaluation used an online survey, created using Microsoft Forms (see Appendix 1), that was distributed via Hub Leads who were asked to cascade to member schools. It comprised six questions of both open and closed variety,
- data on engagement and inclusion was provided by the Inclusion Hubs cross-district lead headteacher,
- data was gathered via additional documents, reports and resources directly shared from the District Inclusion Hub heads within the same period.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1 Engagement and Impact**

The information presented in this section outlines school engagement in the hub model and the impact of the hub model at a child and systemic level.

Table 3 shows the percentage engagement in the hub by district and where available how this has changed over time. It can be seen that 77.1% of eligible schools from the nine districts that provided

a response have accessed support at some level from their inclusion hub. Two hubs were unable to provide this information due to recent structural changes in leadership.

It is evident from the data presented in the table below that overall there has been 35% increase in engagement between 2020-21 and 2022-2023 where this data was available. The data to support understanding of levels of engagement over time is limited and therefore caution is required in any interpretation of this data. It should be noted however, that anecdotally, district leads have observed increased levels of engagement, except in district 14 because of concerns regarding the offer which is being reviewed.

District	Number of schools in district	% engagement reported by district leads	Number of participating schools	Percentage increase in engagement from schools between 2020-21 and 2022-23
1	50	85	43	
2	38	78	30	17
4	23	71	16	
6	52	90	47	43
7	37	89	33	15
8	54	44	24	
9	49	92	45	66
11	56	74	41	
14	29	70	20	
	388		299	

*Table 3. Engagement with the Hub model*

The below table shows that direct support was provided for 469 pupils and indirectly to 1,069. Information obtained from the district leads indicates that support was provided to 464 of these pupils which enabled them to maintain their mainstream placement successfully. It is unlikely that all of these children would have been permanently excluded or transferred to another school, however the cost of a PRU placement is £17,500 and the average cost of a special school place within the maintained sector is £20,000 and in the independent non-maintained sector is £59,000. It can be seen then that if 10% of these pupils had transferred from their mainstream school into more specialist provision, the cost would have been in excess of £1 million.

District Inclusion Hub number	Number of pupils who received direct work over the year	Number of pupils where placement was maintained	Number of pupils receiving indirect support
1	50	40	100
2	108	108	150
4	9	9	17
6	74	74	300
7	44	44	72

8	40	52	12
9	64	76	180
11	33	31	50
14	47	30	188
	469	464	1,069

*Table 4. Number of pupils receiving support and mainstream placement maintenance*

It has not been possible to identify all of the individual schools who have participated in the inclusion hub. It has only been possible to relate the number of suspensions to schools from 5 districts, which are Chorley, Fylde, South Ribble, Lancaster and Wyre for the Autumn term 2022-23. The suspension rate for these schools was half that would have been predicted.

### **3.2 Type of support identified via survey and additional documentation**

Hubs reported a diverse range of direct support being available to schools. The most frequently reported types of support were individual support from specialist professionals, e.g., educational psychologists, specialist HTLAs, specialist teachers, play therapists; out-reach support, from specialist schools or short stay schools; and additional staffing support. Other direct support available to schools included continued access to telephone advice and signposting, support around transition in Year 6 to Year 7, and behaviour support. A number of hubs shared that supporting the wellbeing of head teachers was becoming an increasing priority within the hub offer and that wider staff supervision was important.

The main types of indirect support provided by hubs to schools came in the form of training courses and District Inclusion Hub conferences. Most of which were provided free of charge to settings. Topics for training included autism spectrum disorder, social skills and social story training, positive handling, de-escalation, and trauma and attachment. Conferences appeared to be an increasingly common offer and were well-organised events with a number of specialist speakers, often educational psychologists. They offered support around attachment and trauma, solution focussed problem solving, emotional first aid, building relationships and behavioural approaches. In addition, the recent introduction of specified transition funding for the early years has been utilised by some hubs in order to access training and support from the Early Years team.

### **3.3 Impact at school level**

Unsurprisingly, District Inclusion Hubs found it challenging to determine the systemic impact of both direct and indirect involvement. Notwithstanding this, it can be seen from the table below that 284 of the total number of maintained primary schools in Lancashire reported increased staff confidence and resilience in supporting children presenting with behaviour that challenges. This equates to over 64% of primary schools.

District Inclusion Hub number	Number of schools who report increased staff confidence in dealing with challenging pupils (staff resilience, increased strategies etc)
1	40
2	31
4	-

6	47
7	34
8	24
9	45
11	48

*Table 5. Increased staff confidence*

#### **4 Conclusions**

- Schools are increasingly seeking out support from their district inclusion hub.
- Over 1500 children have received support either directly or indirectly from their inclusion hub.
- More than 400 children have been supported to maintain their school placement thus enhancing their prospects of achieving positive outcomes that are associated with attendance at mainstream school. In addition, this will also have served to alleviate pressure on high needs funding.
- 64% of schools report increased staff confidence and knowledge as a result of support or training provided by the inclusion hub.
- The costs associated with external intervention or specialist support generally exceed the average amount of funding that is de-delegated from individual primary schools.
- This approach targets support to pupils with the greatest level of need across the whole of the school community in Lancashire and would seem to present a cost-effective approach to inclusion.
- At the current time there would not appear to be an alternative offer to inclusion hubs. There is evidence in Lancashire to indicate the challenges to schools are increasing in relation to the number and complexity of need presented by children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. This is consistent with the national picture and reflected in increasing suspension and exclusion rates.