

Lancashire Schools Forum

**Minutes of the meeting held at 10:00 am on Tuesday, 18 October 2022
in the Savoy Suite, The Exchange, County Hall**

Briefing Note

Present:

Schools Members:

Primary School Governors

Stephen Booth
Caroline Clayton
Gerard Collins
Lindy King
Michelle O'Neil
Robert Waring
Sam Ud-din
Tim Young

Academy Governor

Kathleen Cooper
Louise Shaw

Primary School Headteachers

Daniel Ballard – Forum Chair
Sarah Barton
Neil Gurman
Sarah Robson

Academy Principal/Headteacher

Steve Campbell
John Tarbox

Alternative Provision Academy

Secondary School Governors

Janice Astley
John Davey
Brian Rollo

Special School Academy

Special School Governor

Mandy Howarth

Secondary School Headteachers

Oliver Handley

Special School Headteacher

Claire Thompson

Nursery School Headteacher

Faith Stringer

Short Stay Governor

Liz Lavery

Nursery School Governor

Short Stay Headteacher

Abigale Bowe

Members:

Early Years - PVI

Sharon Fenton
Philippa Perks

Other Voting Members

CC Sue Hind
Bill Mann (Church of England -
Diocesan/Church Authorities)

Observers

Mark Evans (Unison)
David Fann
CC Michael Goulthorp
Steve Jones (NASUWT)
Margaret Scrivens (LASGB)
Sarah Troughton

In

attendance: Aman Bhachu
Matt Dexter
Millie Dixon
Andrew Flintoff
Emma Lambert
Kirsty Lister
Sylwia Krajewska
Emma Nicholson
Sally Richardson
Tim Rogers
Michael Sjollem (LASER)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Angela Aspinwall-Livsey, Paula Barlow, Ivan Catlow, CC Anne Cheetham, Thelma Cullen, Gill Donohoe, Helen Dicker, Matt Eastham, Rosie Fearn, Jan Holmes, James Keulemans, Deanne Marsh, Helen Shaw, Edith Thompson and Keith Wright

3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Faith Stringer from Rockwood Nursery attended as a substitute member.

4. FORUM MEMBERSHIP

A number of new members were welcomed to the Forum from September 2022, including:

The Forum welcomed the following new members to their first meeting:

Primary School Governors

- Caroline Clayton, Great Eccleston Copp School
- Emma Smurthwaite, Crawshawbooth Primary School
- Lindy King, Goosnargh Oliverson's C E
- Nigel Whittle, Pilling St. John's Church of England Primary School

Primary School Headteachers

- Helen Shaw, Higham St. John's C E Primary School

Secondary School Headteacher

- Oliver Handley, Pendle Vale High

Schools Block Observer

- Margaret Scrivens, LASGB

Pupil Referral Unit Representative

- Abigale Bowe, Shaftesbury High School

Higher Needs Block Observer

- Paula Barlow, Acorns

Academy Secondary School Headteacher

- Matt Eastham, Penwortham Priory Academy

Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers of the free entitlement to early years education

- Sarah McGladriga, Cliff House Nursery Ltd

Early Years Block Observer

- Heather Lomas, Little Explorers

The Forum will also wish to welcome back the following members returning in positions:

Primary School Governors

- Sam Ud-din, Sandylands Primary School

Academy Secondary School Headteacher

- Steve Campbell, LET Educational Trust CEO

County Councillor Members

The County Council has nominated CC Stewart Jones to replace CC Andrea Kay on the Schools Forum.

The forum will wish to thank CC Andrea Kay for her contribution to the Forum and welcome CC Stewart Jones as her replacement.

The forum also wishes to thank Peter Hindle for his contribution to the forum and welcome Sarah McGladrigan, as his replacement.

The Forum welcomed new members to the first meeting and thanked those members that had left.

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 5th July 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Matters Arising

- Ukraine funding – at this moment no further information was provided regarding funding for Ukraine children. Officer in attendance agreed to look into this and email further information to the School Forum members.
- Green paper- no further update from the DfE.

3. Education Management System (Impulse) Update

Emma Lambert is the Service Lead in the project team and has shared the aims and draft specifications of the project with colleagues, highlighting the potential benefits to school colleagues.

The project Impulse aim is to improve the information shared between LA and schools. Emma Lamber has delivered a presentation to be sent out after the meeting and is welcoming any feedback and ideas to be sent to her.

The benefits of the new system are to remove manual work and to improve efficiency in information sharing. The team has asked schools/parents what they want from the system. For it to pull all the information and enable easy access and keep the data live. Due to Data Protection Act, there will be different layers on who can access the

information and the team has a working group 'Data Ethics' that will overlook this. It was stated that the project is set in 12-24 months to progress.

Members have commented that it will work much better if they could easily allocate a support worker or specific funding for a child.

The Forum

- a) Noted the information provided;**
- b) Requested that the presentation will be sent back to the members and supported the project ahead.**

4. Schools Improvement Functions

Tim Roger has attended to follow up on any questions regarding the Service Improvement Function and explain the value of this service.

It was presented that over 90% of schools in Lancashire are either good or outstanding and this is due to many factors including the; Leadership and leadership teams within the school, governing bodies, teachers, support workers and the wider school community working together, towards a shared goal to provide the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Elements of work include:

- reviews of the quality of education
- audits of leadership and management
- curriculum development
- training for governors/staff.

School Advisors work closely with schools over time building their knowledge of an individual school's needs. For example, if a school is at risk of being "less than good" based on self or Local Authority evaluation or as judged by Ofsted, then enhanced support is provided by the MIT advisers and consultants.

Members discussed how there is no sufficient information on how the de-delegated funds will be allocated for the actual service that School Improvement Functions will provide and the difference between the statutory and traded service.

Members requests further information to be provided to fully comprehend the service offered before actual formal voting. It was decided formal vote will take place once more information will be provided and a meeting to discuss this.

The Forum

- a) Noted the information provided;**
- b) Requested that further information in response to comments and queries raised to be shared with the Forum and further information be provided to make a formal vote.**

5. Inclusion Report

Sally Richardson has attended to follow up on any questions regarding Inclusion Report in the de-delegation.

Members have raised questions on how the de-delegation of Inclusion Hubs for primary schools (only) is working very well in some districts. Sally has informed us that the COVID -19 has disturbed the work and good evaluation for this. Although, the team will have a meeting from November to be able to assess those that do not and improve the service overall in Lancashire-wide. Performance indicators will be assessed and will be feedback to members.

The Forum

- a) Noted the information provided;**
- b) Requested that further information in response to comments and queries raised to be shared with the Forum and further presentations be made at future meetings.**

6. Energy Cost Update

A letter was published on 6th September 2022 on 'October 2022 annual energy price increase'.

Michael Sjollem from LASER Energy Buying Group attended the meeting to provide a presentation of current cost raises and explain the current situation the sector is in.

It was noted that even though the costs increased the team purchased energy in advance and the services are in a much better position if they would not. The present business cap is set at 21.1 p/kwh in commodity and 13 p/kwh in non-commodity.

The team is waiting for actual figures to come in to provide a better forecast.

Members appreciated the Energy Team providing an overview of cost raises. There was an inquiry about Oil supply, but it was advised that the school individually looks at a cheaper supplier as they do not provide this service.

The Forum

- a) Noted published letter;**
- b) Noted the information provided and more will be provided once figures will be set.**

7. Recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group held on 20 September 2022.

i. Schools Block Funding Arrangements 2023/24

On 19 July 2022, the DfE made announcements about the 2023/24 school funding arrangements. This report provided relevant information, including proposals for a 2023/24 MFG level of 0.5%, which are the subject of consultation with schools and academies.

National Funding Formula (NFF) 2023/24

The basic structure of the National Funding Formula (NFF) remains unchanged for 2023/24, but DfE have increased factor values and made some other changes to the arrangements. Further details are provided below:

Key changes to the schools NFF in 2023 to 2024 are:

- rolling the 2022 to 2023 schools supplementary grant into the NFF by:
 - adding an amount representing what schools receive through the grant into their baselines
 - adding the value of the lump sum, basic per pupil rates and free school meals Ever 6 (FSM6) parts of the grant onto the respective factors in the NFF
 - uplifting the minimum per pupil values by the supplementary grant's basic per-pupil values, and an additional amount which represents the average amount of funding schools receive from the FSM6 and lump sum parts of the grants
- increasing NFF factor values (on top of the amounts we have added for the schools supplementary grant) by:
 - 4.3% to free school meals at any time in the last 6 years (FSM6) and income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI). DfE say that this additional support directed to disadvantaged pupils, by increasing the FSM6 and IDACI factors in the schools NFF by a greater amount than other factors, which means that a greater proportion of schools NFF will be targeted towards deprived pupils than ever before. 9.8% of the schools NFF will be allocated according to deprivation in 2023/24. 2.4% to the basic entitlement, low prior attainment (LPA), FSM, English as an additional language (EAL), mobility, and sparsity factors, and the lump sum.
 - 0.5% to the floor and the minimum per pupil levels (MPPL)
 - 0% on the premises factors, except for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which has increased by Retail Prices Index excluding mortgage interest payments (RPIX) which is 11.2% for the year to April 2022

Local Schools Block Formula 2023/24

The Forum has previously agreed that Lancashire will adopt the NFF factors and values as the local funding formula. However, a degree of local discretion remains about the level of the Minimum funding guarantee (MFG). LAs have the freedom to set the MFG in local formulae between +0.0% and +0.5% per pupil.

Views will be sought from Lancashire primary and secondary schools and academies in the consultation to take place early in the autumn term 2022. The LA proposal included in the consultation will be for the MFG to be set at +0.5% in 2023/24, as this provides the maximum allowable protection for Lancashire schools and academies and matches the funding floor protection included in the NFF.

The School Forum was asked and fully agreed for the MFG to be set at +0.5%.

Notional SEN

The DfE's 2023/24 operational guidance emphasised that LAs should keep their notional SEN budget under review to make sure that their schools' notional SEN budget is a realistic amount.

the DfE have published information that confirms there is no national approach to the calculation of schools' notional budget for pupils with SEN through the NFF

DfE indicate nationally LA's notional SEN allocations range from below 5% to above 20% the median is 10.8%.

Lancashire's notional SEN figure in 2022/23 equates to 17.3%.

Members will recall that the Lancashire notional SEN calculation was reviewed ahead of the 2020/21 financial year, and following a consultation with schools, the Forum supported the introduction of a simplified notional SEN calculation from April 2020.

After reviewing the Lancashire position ahead of FY 2023/24, the LA is not proposing any amendment to notional SEN methodology from April 2023.

The Working Group are asked to consider this position and support the proposal to retain the current notional SEN calculation for the 2023/24 financial year.

The LA will keep the notional SEN calculation under review in future years, especially in light of any national guidance from the DfE.

The forum was asked if the School Forum agrees to retain the current national SEN and if all agree. The School Forum supported retaining the current national SEN.

Exceptional Circumstances Factor

This factor has been utilised by Lancashire for a number of years supporting 3 schools

Guidance for 2023/24 specifies that where the DfE's approval was prior to 2018 to 2019 the local authority will need to submit a new disapplication request for consideration.

In Lancashire's circumstances, a new disapplication request was needed to be submitted by 10 October 2022.

The Working Group was asked to support the disapplication to the DfE to request the continued use of an Exceptional Factor in the Lancashire formula, to provide allocations to 3 schools.

Schools Forum on 18 October members is asked to formally vote on supporting the submission of the disapplication request to the DfE, as this will form part of the disapplication request.

The School Forum was all in agreement to support the disapplication request.

The DSG Forecast

The current forecast shows a total increase of circa 2% in the Schools Block from April 2022, however, it must be remembered that actual DSG allocations in Lancashire, to be published in December 2022, could be lower than those in the provisional notification from the DfE, dependant on pupil data from the October 2022 school census.

The Schools Block funding increase is welcomed, but members will be aware that there are considerable costs pressures currently facing the sector, with staff costs, energy and general inflation all increasing significantly above this level.

School forum members have discussed how the Early Years sector finds themselves in a difficult financial position with the funding and has asked to consider £1 million to be transferred to the group if the headroom allows.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.*
- b) Noted that consultation responses on the level of MFG would be presented to the Forum meeting on 18 October 2022 and that the Forum would be asked to formally consider the 2023/24 rate.*
- c) Supported the proposal to retain the current notional SEN calculation for the 2023/24 financial year.*
- a) Supported the proposed voting arrangements as set out for consideration of the MFG proposals.*
- b) Supported the disapplication to the DfE to request the continued use of an Exceptional Factor in the Lancashire formula, to provide allocations to 3 schools to cover the costs of renting premises for the schools.*

Subsequent to the meeting, copies of the 2023/24 service de-delegations and schools block funding formula full consultation document and the summary document were circulated to members and copies were provided with the Forum papers.

Analysis and comments from the consultation responses were presented to the Forum meeting on 18 October 2022 and members considered the responses in relation to the MFG proposals.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the report and the MFG consultation analysis;**
- b) All voted that the level of MFG to be used in the Lancashire funding formula for 2023/24 be set at +0.5%.**
- c) *The School Forum agreed to retain the current national SEN.***
- d) Supported the disapplication to continue the rents payments in the Lancashire funding formula.**
- e) Considered transferring £1million to be transferred to the Early Years group if headroom allows.**

i. Inclusion Hub Report

Despite being scheduled to attend a meeting, Sally Richardson was not available due to unforeseen circumstances. Inclusion Services will be asked to attend School Forum meetings in order to provide further feedback. A report was sent once available and included as an Item on the School Forum agenda on 18th October 2022.

The Working Group:

- a) Suggested for Inclusion Services to attend future School Forum meeting.***

The Forum noted the information

ii. Service De-delegations 2023/24

Information was provided about 2023/24 de-delegation proposals and the consultation with schools

Each year, the primary and secondary school members of the Schools Forum must decide on Service De-delegation proposals put forward by the Authority. Where appropriate, agreed de-delegations are then offered to nursery schools, special schools and PRUs as group buy-backs.

At the July 2022 working group meeting, initial proposals for 2023/24 de-delegations were presented for consideration. Proposals included a continuation of the 4 service de-delegations that had been approved by the Forum for 2022/23, which were:

- Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions

- Heritage Learning Service - Primary Schools Only
- Support for Schools in Financial Difficulty
- Inclusion Hubs - Primary Schools Only

The consultation also proposed the de-delegation of an additional service in 2023/24, relating to School Improvement Functions. Tim Roger attended the meeting to provide information about School Improvement Functions.

At the time of the working group, the de-delegation consultation papers had not yet been approved for publication, but it was agreed to circulate the papers to members once they were cleared.

The closing date for consultation responses was 14 October 2021 and a final analysis and comments which will be provided to the Schools Forum meeting on 18 October 2022 when maintained primary and secondary school members will be asked to formally vote on the 2023/24 de-delegation proposals.

The Working Group:

- Noted the report;*
- Noted that de-delegation papers would be circulated to members after the meeting;*
- Noted that consultation responses would be presented to the Forum meeting on 18 October 2022 and that the Forum would be asked to formally consider de-delegation decisions for 2023/24.*
- Noted that there will be further information provided on School Improvements Functions.*

Subsequent to the meeting, copies of the 2023/24 service de-delegations and schools block funding formula full consultation document and the summary document were circulated to members and copies were provided with the Forum papers.

Analysis and comments from the consultation responses were presented to the Forum meeting on 18 October 2022 and members considered the responses in relation to each proposal primary and secondary school members of the Forum then voted on each de-delegation proposal.

The Forum:

- Noted the report and the de-delegation consultation analysis and comments;**
- Primary school members voted on each of the possible de-delegations affecting primary schools and secondary school members voted on each of the possible de-delegations affecting secondary schools, as set out below:**

i.	(12) Primary school members voted to de-delegate Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions for primary schools in 2023/24, at 2022/23 levels.
ii.	(4) Secondary school members voted to de-delegate Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions for secondary schools in 2023/24, at 2022/23 levels.
iii.	(10) Primary school members voted to de-delegate the Heritage Learning Service for primary schools in 2023/24. (2) Primary school members abstained from answering.
iv.	(12) Primary school members voted to de-delegate Schools in Financial Difficulty, for primary schools in 2023/24.
v.	(4) Secondary school members voted to de-delegate Schools in Financial Difficulty, for secondary schools in 2023/24.
vi.	(10) Primary school members voted to de-delegate the Primary Inclusion Hubs for primary schools in 2023/24. (1) Primary school member voted against the Inclusion Hubs for 2023/24. (1) Primary school member abstained from answering.
vii.	There was no formal vote on School Improvement Function, further information was requested by the forum on what the offer provides. Voting arrangements are to be confirmed. It was noted that the Chair has received correspondence from a school forum member against this de-delegation.

- c) Whilst the primary school representatives on the Forum supported the continued Inclusion Hub de-delegation for 2022/23, they noted that there were some inconsistencies with the level of satisfaction expressed in the arrangements across districts and the Forum asked that efforts be made to ensure that there is a consistent level of provision and the sharing of best practice across the county.**

iii. Clawback Exemption Request

In July 2022, the Forum considered the School Balances and Clawback Policy for 2022/23 and agreed that clawback should be reintroduced on excessive revenue balances at March 2023. A copy of the agreed policy is provided at Appendix A

Following notification of the Forum's decision, requests have been received from 2 Lancashire secondary schools requesting an exception to the policy at March 2023.

Request (1)

The school in question has saved funds for artificial pitch (MUGA), which impacts on its ability to deliver a full curriculum offer in PE. Funds have been saved for the artificial pitch to be installed on site, but installation is being delayed due to planning permission not yet being granted. The actual expenditure for the artificial pitch with these delays will fall into 2023/24.

The school has struggled to find suitable outdoor playing space to support both curricular and non-curricular activities as the playing field has very little drainage and is unusable for most of the year. The proximity of a tidal waterway running around the site leads to a high-water table at certain points of the year which adds to the problem.

In preparation for the potential costs, the school have managed to save a significant amount of money for the project. The school is requesting Forum to consider exempting £225,000 from clawback at the end of the financial year so that the funding can be utilised to fund the artificial pitch to provide curricular and non-circular activities to its students in 2023/24 on response to the ongoing issue with site drainage.

Request (2)

Second secondary school in question has accumulated a Capital of 390,000. They are currently approaching on completing one project but planning to start second project before end of the year. This project was delayed due to a few factors and not have started by the 31st of March due, one of which is the limited times that capital works can be completed. The worst case could be that school would have £290,000 ring fenced for capital works that will not be completed as at 31st of March 2023. Details of the projects are provided below.

Development of the old site supervisors house to a business and conference centre

There is no designated meeting space within school whatsoever – every room has been utilised for curriculum use, including former meeting spaces which are now intervention rooms. So, the meeting spaces have been re-allocated to curriculum use.

The former meeting spaces were not appropriate for parental meetings because they were all placed within the main building of the school, so parents were moving around the corridors at the same time as pupils and could easily walk into any classroom if they were determined to. Meetings that were contentious and sometimes became heated were less private than they should be, because of the position of the meeting space.

Consequently, we need to create appropriate and safe meeting spaces that allow us to engage with parents and professionals whilst keeping our pupils safe. The refurbishment of the house allows us to do this. Parents and professionals will not enter the main school building at all, they will be accommodated in the house only, which means that they will never cross paths with our pupils, thereby enhancing our ability to safeguard pupils during the school day.

So the refurbishment of the house will allow us to engage meaningfully with parents and professionals, a critical element of our work as we seek to improve attendance, re-engage pupils and parents who have disengaged with us and facilitate the growing number of professionals who are involved on a regular basis in private/confidential meetings with our pupils.

Curriculum benefit for redevelopment of our HE classroom :

Our Home Economics room is barely fit for purpose. It is our only specialist food technology room and has insufficient workstations/cookers/hobs for the class sizes we now must accommodate. Additionally, the room is the original room from when the school was built so is some 30 years old. Pupils are working in a room that has a poor layout, inadequate equipment and insufficient capacity to expand using the current gas and electrical infrastructure. Refurbishing this classroom is a priority, since pupils cannot cook in any other room in the school. To not refurbish the room would result in a narrowing of the curriculum, meaning school would not be delivering the full breadth and balance of Technology that the National Curriculum requires.

Science Learning Partnerships

In addition, the School holds a Science Learning Partnerships contract for Lancashire and Cumbria. They maintained this contract for many years and the current agreement is valid from 1 April 2022 for 17 months until 31 August 2023. This partnership is related to STEM learning and is ultimately funded by the DfE. Significant balances are often held at the end of the year, for example as of 31.03.22 £200,000 was in their bank account for this contract.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.*
- b) Supported clawback exemptions for 2022/23 to be taken as a recommendation to the School Forum meeting.*

The Forum

- a) Noted the clawbacks requested;**
- b) Approved the working groups' recommendations and supported both clawback exemptions for 2022/23.**

8. Recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group meeting held on 27 September 2022.

i. High Needs Block 2022/23 – Budget Monitoring

Summer term 2022/23 data had been utilised to provide High Needs Block monitoring and analysis for members

Summer term 2022/23 data had been utilised to provide monitoring and analysis for members. It was noted that the HNB budget is currently forecasting a circa £10m underspend at 31 March 2023.

However, it was emphasised that the yearend monitoring was an estimate of the full year forecast, based on expenditure that occurred in the summer term of 2022. There remains significant ongoing financial pressure facing this block despite the current monitoring position, as the demand and costs continue to rise. It is anticipated that the final outturn position will come in higher than the current forecast.

Members considered the information and also discussed the Lancashire position against other LAs nationally. It was noted that some LAs had overspend high needs funding across recent years and accumulated deficits on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). DfE were working with the LAs with the most significant issues to agree recovery plans with them.

The Working Group

a) Noted the report.

The Forum noted the report.

ii. High Needs Block Funding 2023/24

DfE announcements have been made about the 2023/24 HNB funding arrangements. This report provided further details.

Overall, core schools funding (including funding for mainstream schools and high needs) is increasing by £1.5 billion in 2023/24 compared to the previous year.

High needs funding is increasing by a further £570 million, or 6.3%, in 2023-24. This brings the total high needs budget to £9.7 billion. The high needs NFF will ensure that every local authority receives at least a 5% increase per head of their 2-18 population, with some authorities seeing gains of up to 7%.

Alongside DfE's continued investment in high needs, the Government remains committed to ensuring a financially sustainable system, where resources are effectively targeted to need. Later this year the Government will confirm the next steps in implementing their reform programme, following the consultation on the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper published in March.

Final allocations of schools, high needs and central schools services funding for 2023-24 will be calculated in December, based on the latest pupil data at that point, when DfE announce local authorities' Dedicated Schools Grant allocations.

High Needs Block National Funding Formula (NFF) for 2023/24

The basic structure for HN NFF is not changing.

Information on the key decisions taken by DfE for 2023/24 are set out below.

The high needs National Funding Formula (NFF) floor and gains cap have been set as follows for 2023/24:

- The funding floor – the funding floor is 5%, having adjusted the baseline to include the supplementary high needs funding that was allocated to local authorities in December 2021
- The gains cap – the limit on gains per head of the population is set at 7%

The hospital education factor will also be uplifted by 5%.

DfE have decided to keep the historic spend factor at the same cash value in the 2023-24 NFF as in 2022-23. The increase in the total high needs amount to be allocated means that, the proportion of total funding going through the historic spend factor will continue to reduce, from 31% of the 2022-23 formula allocations to 29% in 2023-24.

The Government will keep this factor under review in future years, with a view to removing it completely when we have alternative proxies to include within the formula.

Lancashire Position

The current forecast for HNB is circa 6%. The demand growth last few years has been about £10 million a year. A considerable strain is expected with the current cost pressures for HNB. An initial analysis of these cost pressures was provided to the working group.

Members will be aware that demand growth over the last few years has been circa £10 million per year and inflationary pressures will only add to the cost increases for the sector going forward. There is therefore expected to be considerable strain on the HNB in 2023/24 and beyond.

At individual school level, there are further considerable cost pressures currently facing the sector, with staff costs, energy and general inflation all increasing significantly.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the report.

The Forum noted the report.

ii. HNB Indicative Commissioned Place Numbers 2023/24

This report provided an update on the 2023/24 HNB commissioned places process.

The Working Group supported some changes to the system for PRUs but agreed to leave the special schools process unaltered.

In July 2022, following ratification of the working group's recommendations by the full Forum, correspondence was issued to special schools with the indicative place figures for 2023/24 to provide an opportunity for individual schools to have discussions and make any representations with the relevant services.

A copy of the indicative commissioned place number for each special school for 2023/24, based purely on the calculation methodology, was provided for the working group. A total of 3,329 places are included in the indicative commissioning process at July 2022. This figure is a total increase of 141 compared to July 2021.

The Inclusion Service were currently working on agreeing on the commissioned PRU/Alternative Provision places and will provide an update for Schools Forum on 18 October 2022.

The representative from the PRUs raised concerns regarding the Indicative PRU numbers that were sent out as part of the Commissioned Places Data. Sally Richardson agreed to relook at these numbers with finance and ensure the provisions have final place numbers as soon as possible to aid budget setting

2023/24 TPG and TPECG Allocations

Following decision from Forum, the LA have updated 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.

The funding on commissioned places should be provided at minimum of 40 places and in March 2023, for the last time, a top up payment should be made to cover any differences caused.

PRU's Modelling 2023/24

The change in modelling for 2023/24, has removed the need for the intervention place additional pay and pension grant top up. This was introduced for PRU's in 2021/22 to offset the shortfall in funding due to an impact that intervention places had.

Special Schools Modelling 2023/24

There has been a change in modelling for 2023/24 for the pay and pension grant, to be in line with DfE guidance, this funding works on the combined pre and post 16 commissioned places.

Early modelling has raised an issue due to the above, so are proposing a minor change to the Post 16 commissioned place funding payments for the Summer and Autumn

terms. Historically post 16 commissioned places have been paid Apr-Jul and Aug-Dec, with pre 16 places paid Apr-Aug and Sep-Dec. We are proposing to move the Post 16 commissioned places payments in line with Pre 16 so that both Pre and Post 16 are paid Apr-Aug and Sep-Dec. This would simplify the funding, put them both in line with the authority's section 251 return and DSG payments.

Modelling shows that the impact on this is minimal, however, LA will make a one-off payment in 2023/24 for any schools that may have a small reduction in funding.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Support the reformed modelling for HNB 2023/24 including TPG and TPECG Allocations*

The Forum

- c) **Noted the report;**
- d) **Confirmed to support reformed modelling for HNB 2023/24 including TPG and TPECG Allocations.**
- e) **Requested that the Inclusion Service provide PRU figures in due course.**

iii. MASH Education Annual Report

The funding for the Multi-Agency safeguarding Hub (MASH) was transferred to the HNB in 2022/23, as the DfE were reducing the historic commitments costs included in the Central school Services Block (CSSB).

For 2022/23, £150k was included in the HNB budget, and a similar allocation will be included in initial budget proposals for 2023/24.

The Working group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum noted the report.

iii. *Lancashire Hospital Education Service: Annual Report: Academic Year 2021-22*
The Lancashire Hospital Education Service (LHES) is a centrally managed service that is funded from the DSG High Need Block. Information was provided about the service in 2021/22.

Lancashire Hospital Education Service is centrally funded by DSG HNB. In 2021/22, £927K was allocated. The aim of this service is to provide to a high-quality education suitable to the child need and to support them on a return to school. There are 4 current settings which are explained further in Appendix A.

The service is delivered in a number of settings:

- ELCAS: located on Burnley Hospital site:
- The Cove: located in Heysham.
- Hospital Classrooms at Royal Preston and Lancaster General Hospitals
- Home Teaching.

Each setting completes an annual report- and a summary is produced by Audrey Swann, Head of Virtual School for CLA and previously CLA and Hospital Education Service.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum noted the report.

8. Recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group meeting held on 4 October 2022.

i. Appointment of Working Group Chair

This was Peter Hindle's final meeting and Philippa Perks has been nominated as his replacement as the Working Group Chair.

Members elected Philippa Perks, as the new working group Chair.

The Working Group:

- a) *Thanked Peter for his contribution to the Forum.*
- b) *Confirmed that Philippa is elected as the new Early Years Block Working Group Chair.*

The Forum noted the new Early Years Working Group Chair.

ii. Schools Forum Early Years Block Membership

An update was provided on membership changes.

The Working Group:

- a) *Welcomed Sarah McGladrigian as one of the formal Schools Forum representatives from September 2022.*

The Forum noted the report.

iii. Early Years Block Funding 2023/24

This report provided an update on EYB funding for 2023/24 and highlighted the possibility that a schools block transfer may be unavailable from April 2023.

On 19 July 2022, the DfE made announcements about the 2023/24 school funding arrangements for Schools, High Needs and the Central School Services Block.

As per established practice, no information was included on the Early Years Block allocation from April 2023.

Working Group members will know that in 2020/21 and 2021/22 the Forum agreed to transfer to £2m each year. In 2022/23, no transfer was possible.

However, to help support the transition the Forum agreed that £1m of DSG reserves could be utilised to support the early years' block budget in 2022/23.

DfE announcements included Schools Block Operational Guidance for 2023/24, and this confirmed that LAs continue to be allowed to transfer up to 0.5% of their schools block to other blocks of the DSG, with schools forum approval.

Further local modelling will be needed to assess the 2023/24 position, but at this point it is not expected that headroom will be available at levels that were accessible in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The option of utilising some reserves to support the early years block may again be considered in 2023/24.

The final position about possible Schools Block headroom will only be available in December once final 2023/24 DSG allocations are received.

If required, an urgent consultation about any possible Schools Block transfer could be held with schools and academies once the final DSG allocations from DfE have been assessed.

Whilst several uncertainties remain before any final decisions can be taken about the early years block funding, the group may wish to express any initial views on the early years block budget for 2023/24.

There is obviously uncertainty, but the following details have been published by the DfE but are unconfirmed and could be impacted on by outcomes from consultations and other factors.

EY consultation indicates the 3/4 YO rate increasing by £0.21 as this now includes the teacher pay & pension grant being included in the base rate. Pending decision on the 4p from reserves.

2-year-old entitlement Lancashire is likely to receive an additional £0.06 per hour for the 2-year-old entitlement for 2023/24,

Supplementary funding hourly rate for maintained nursery schools is indicated to increase by £0.49 per hour. The increase in rate includes the TPPG included in the hourly rate for 23/24 to leave a forecasted rate per hour of £4.28 from £3.67 in 22/23.

Members understood that further modelling is needed. They recognise the sector to be historically underfunded and that Covid has affected children's development as they have missed out on important years. Members have expressed those children post-Covid require further work with their communication and emotional development.

The working group discussed how there is no separate funding for the provision of a free school meal for early years children who attend maintained schools for morning and afternoon sessions, and schools have either been funding these children from their wider schools budget, using EYPP or charging parents. It was discussed the fact that the statutory guidance does state that Local Authorities are expected to provide an FSM for early years children in maintained settings and the group agreed that the issue should be forwarded to the full Schools Forum for further debate. Andrew Cadman who is the interim senior adviser for Early Years, will also raise this issue with our DfE contacts, to get a view from them on where local authorities are expected to fund this from.

Members asked for DSG reserves to be utilised to support the additional 4p in the base rate for another year due to all the challenges they are facing.

The Working Group:

b) Noted the report.

The Forum noted the report and endorsed the Working Group's recommendations.

- iv. Urgent Business Procedure on DfE Consultation on Early Years National Funding Formulae and Childcare: Regulatory Changes

The DfE had issued consultations 'DfE Consultation on Early Years Funding Formulae' and 'DfE Consultation on Childcare: Regulatory Changes (Ratios)'. Reports were presented offering information about the DfE consultation and providing draft Forum responses for consideration.

It was noted that due to the closing date for both consultation responses being 16 September 2022, formal approval of a Forum submission was sought using the Urgent Business Procedure.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the report.

The Forum

- a) Noted the consultation response was submitted using the Forum Urgent Business Procedure as the deadline was before the next school forum meeting.**

iv. **DfE Visit to Lancashire**

Andrew Cadman provided a verbal update on the DfE visit.

- It was noted that the DfE very rarely meets with EY Sector representatives and LA officers where there is the level of positive relationship that we have in Lancashire. This is a testament to the hard work, commitment and passion that is delivered daily.
- DfE officers were impressed with the current take up rate for funded places, alongside the quality of provision that those children are attending.

The Working Group:

a) Acknowledged DfE visit.

The Forum noted the report.

v. **Energy costs and Nursery Closures**

Nurseries are facing increased energy, food and staffing costs, as well as struggling to recruit. The overall number of childcare providers in England dropped by around 4,000 between March 2021 and March 2022, the largest decline since 2016, according to figures from Ofsted.

One key expenditure element for the sector relates to increases in energy costs. 8 examples have been provided in the report.

Nurseries Closures

We have been informed that there have been 8 recent Nursery closures.

One was planned to be reopened but failed due to a business group going into administration.

Analysis of net nursery closures in recent years is provided in Appendix A.

- In the six months from 1 March 2022 to 1 September 2022, 74 net closures were recorded (2 new providers opened).
- In three-year from 1 March 2019 to 1 March 2022, 138 net closures were recorded (71 new providers have opened).

They have expressed views about challenging positions the early years sector found itself in. The discussion included further net nursery closures. Members have stated the issue with recruitment for minimum wage and how the nursery runs at half of the capacity that it is used to. Therefore, they cannot take more children to make up for the increased costs.

Mel Foster has stated that it is recognised that the whole county is sufficient this may not currently change but the team watches if the pattern of net closures stabilises or increases.

The working group members have raised the costs increases for all costs including food, gas/electricity, and industry rates. The cap introduced by the government still is not solving the issue the sector is facing.

Members have asked to find out if they could get relief from business rates to help them to cope. The discussion was raised about LCC writing again to local councils to ask them to provide business rate relief for Early Years settings.

The Working Group:

b) Noted the report.

The Forum noted the report.

vi. Education Partnership and Around the School and Settings (TASS)

Team Around the School and Settings, or TASS, is a collaborative way of working across services, schools and settings with children and young people.

The service is working in partnership to achieve the priorities of the education strategy. The Education Strategy, provided in Appendix A, sets out the aspirations for education in Lancashire but the context in which the strategy is delivered will shift year on year. For this reason, the Education Strategy will be supported by an annual delivery plan. A delivery plan is provided in Appendix B.

Sarah Gorst attended for this item as she has asked for feedback regarding the current Delivery Plan before the next half-term to be sent directly to her. TASS want to change the way they deliver and create improvement in its services and ensure that early years are included as a key part in the plan.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the Education Strategy and Delivery plan.

The forum discussed the financial struggle of the Early Years sector and how they could benefit from £1million transfer if it will be available.

The Forum noted the report.

9. Forum Correspondence

There was one Forum related correspondence to consider at this meeting.

The letter was written to the Chair of the School Forum by a forum member.

The Forum noted the correspondence during the de-delegations.

10. Any Other Business

- Supply Scheme - Officers have received concerns from schools regarding the processing time of claims for the Supply Insurance Scheme and acknowledged that processing times are slower.
In response, officers looking at transferring the processing from the Exchequer Services team to the Schools Finance team and hope to bring this as an item at the next School Forum meeting

11. Date of Future Meetings (Enclosure)

It was noted that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00 am on Thursday 13 January 2022. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course. It was agreed by the School Forum members for future meetings to be face-to-face for engagement, open discussion and the purpose of the forum.