

Item 4a

Headteacher Meetings

Update on High Needs

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Director

March Headteacher Meetings

We started a conversation about how we approach the challenge together. You asked us to consider. . .

- Restricting funding only to children with EHCPs
- Moving to a devolved model (if allowed)
- Clarification of LIFTs role in the HNF process
- Explore ways to incentivise schools to be more inclusive
- Consider transitions and longer term funding solutions
- Look at expanding local SRP provision
- Learn from Other Local Authorities
- Look at invest to save options

What's happened since we last spoke?

- We have spoken to the DfE about how far we can move towards a devolved model
- We have met with the LiFT Strategic Board
- We have spoken to KsENT and received a helpful discussion document
- We have visited Hertfordshire, Hampshire and East Sussex
- We have reached an agreement in principle with FE College Principals on moving to a more managed system for High Needs
- We have submitted our response to the Education Select Committee's call for evidence
- We have been lobbying Government through CCN, ADCS, ACSL, F40 & WorthLess?

What have we learnt?

- We cannot move to a fully devolved model, Place Plus is here to stay
- Strong support for investment in local provision to save costly independent placements
- Many authorities are in a similar position to Kent
- The rates we pay are relatively generous compared to most OLAs
- More and more concerns about the system and lack of funding are being raised nationally

Mainstream HNF - Our Options

- Option A - Continue with the current system of Need Specific Top Up Funding Rates
- Option B - Continue with the current system but from 1 April 2019 only for children with an EHCP
- Option C - Overtime, move decision making to an area based approach involving Headteachers (closest to devolved model)

Option A - Continue with the current system of Need Specific Top Up Funding Rates

Positives:

- It's only been running in its current form since 1 April 2018
- It was based on the findings of a detailed review in 2017
- So far, demand appears to have stabilised and is also within budget
- It offers funding without the need to apply for an EHCP leading to the possibility of earlier intervention

Option B - Continue with the current system but from 1 April 2019 only for children with an EHCP

Positives:

- It builds on the positives in option A
- It theory it could provide an initial saving to the HNB

Risks:

- Creates a perverse incentive to seek statutory assessment leading to an inevitable increase in EHCPs
- Savings are likely to be short term as children who need funding will get EHCP
- Another change to a relatively new system

Option C - Move decision making to an area based approach involving Schools

Positives:

- Involves schools in decision making (closer to the child)
- This could involve devolving budget responsibility to area decision makers

Risks:

- Would require additional LA resource to support
- Potential for greater inconsistencies in decision making between areas and at different times during the year
- Another change to a relatively new system

Other HNF options we are considering

Requests for Statutory Assessment:

- We have listened to schools concerns regarding requests for Statutory Assessment and the school's views are not being fully considered
- In response to this we are strengthening the process in order that the SEN Assessment and Placement Officers are supported by the SEN Provision Evaluation Officers (all SEN Teachers), to consider the information provided by schools in the Appendix 2
- The focus will be on using the knowledge and expertise of the PEOs to ensure that schools views are being fully taken into account

Other HNF options we are considering

Independent placements:

- introducing greater scrutiny of placement decisions, possibly routed through a central point.
- looking at reasons why local special provision was not appropriate. Is it down to inability to meet needs (e.g. lack of therapeutic provision) or capacity or something else?
- challenging cost of provision and smarter/cheaper commissioning models e.g. block payments.

Other HNF options we are considering

Special Schools (with thank to these ideas from KsENT):

- growing local provision where its needed through use of satellite sites, including post 16 and post 19 provision
- look at invest to save options to avoid more costly independent placements e.g. therapeutic provision
- providing further training and support to mainstream school to support greater inclusion.
- investment in STLS e.g. NQT training
- introducing a smarter admissions process

Group Discussions

Mainstream

- Which option do you prefer? A, B or C
- Are there other options we should explore?

Other parts of High Needs

- Do you support the actions we are taking?
- Is there anything else that we have missed?

What Next?

- We will take stock of the views from this round of HT meetings and share these with the Funding Forum on 29 June
- If we make changes to the mainstream process, share with the Funding Forum in late September, with formal approval at the end of November
- Any changes would come into effect from 1 April 2019 (subject to Forum approval)