

**DRAFT MINUTES
MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS' FUNDING FORUM (SFF)**

13:30 – 15:30, 11 June 2021

Virtual Teams Meeting

Present: John Dennis (Chairperson), Mark Tomkins (Vice Chairperson), Kate Le Page, David Meades, Jenny Ashley-Jones, Richard Rule, Sue Birchall, David Anderson, Sue Beauchamp, Sarah Beaney, Céranne Litton, David Gleed, Neil Willis, Annabel Lilley, Emma Bradshaw, Ben Cooper, David Stanley, Phil Sayer.

Shellina Prendergast (Cabinet Member), Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director), Christine McInnes (Director of Education), Karen Stone (Business Partner), Robin Goldsmith (Clerk), Claire Walker (Minutes)

Guest: Jamie Brooks (Commissioning), Christy Holden (Head of Commissioning), Celia Buxton

Apologies: Michael Powis, Mark Seymour, David Whitehead, Tracey McCartney

1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the following two new members to the Schools' Funding Forum:</p> <p>Shelina Prendergast – Cabinet Member Christine McInnes – Director of Education</p> <p>The Chair thanked the following member for their service to the Schools' Funding Forum:</p> <p>Richard Long – Cabinet Member</p>	
2.	<p>High Needs Commissioning update</p> <p>Christy Holden and Jamie Brooks gave a presentation on this item.</p> <p>There are three topics being taken through Kent's governance process for agreement:</p> <p><u>Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools</u></p> <p>Placements are currently spot-purchased, outcomes are inconsistent and costs are increasing.</p> <p>A Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) approach has been recommended to provide cost clarity and standard contract terms for placements across Kent.</p>	

Neil Willis welcomes the idea of a proposal to make changes to standardise a process for Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools. He has suggested engagement from Forum members.

Jamie Brooks has offered to put details forward to the person coordinating a working group.

Annabel Lilley raised concerns that an EHCP no longer indicates the primary need of a child and has a concern about how this will work with the Dynamic Purchasing System tool.

Jamie Brooks has confirmed that there would still be an element of choice when making a placement but the DPS tool will enable decisions to be made more consistently.

Home Tuition

Standard Home Tuition is used short term when a child is either awaiting a placement, or between placements.

KCC currently uses an internal service (The Education Programme) as well as spot-purchase arrangements with external suppliers.

The proposal is to develop a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with internal service to increase capacity to accommodate the children that are currently with an external provider but receiving a standard type of tuition.

Complex Home Tuition is not currently included in this project and will continue to be purchased on a spot purchase basis.

Sue Beauchamp has queried the use of expensive private tutors. What is in place to quality assure these placements?

Jamie Brooks stated that under the new system, standard tuition will be provided by those individuals or companies that have been assessed and agreed by the authority. However, children requiring complex home tuition are not currently included in this plan.

SEN Therapies

KCC commission therapeutic services to meet needs in EHCPs. Services are currently spot purchased and usually from smaller providers.

The proposal is to establish a Qualified Provider List to stabilise market and establish improved contract terms.

John Dennis has queried the expected participation of providers in all three topics.

Jamie Brooks has confirmed there will be engagement with the market and support for those that are struggling to meet the expected requirements.

	<p>These plans have been shared with the Forum for comment before proceeding through formal governance.</p> <p>Three papers have already been presented to Children, Young People and Young People's (CYPE) Directorate Management Team (Corporate Director & Directors) and the next stage is to present to CYPE Cabinet Committee on 30th June ahead of the key decision.</p> <p>If the Key decision is agreed procuring will begin for the therapies and the independent and non-maintained special schools. SLA developing can begin for the Home tuition.</p> <p>Forum have requested to be kept updated.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes and matters arising from the SFF meetings held on the 12th of February:</p> <p>The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.</p> <p>Actions from previous meeting:</p> <p>Schools Funding Forum: Elections.</p> <p>Two Academy posts - nominees due Friday 18th June 2021 for September 2021 appointment.</p> <p>Date of Future Meetings.</p> <p>There has been a shift in the meeting dates and times and the Chair would like to thank the members for their understanding.</p>	
4.	<p>Term Time</p> <p>Robin Goldsmith gave a verbal update on this item.</p> <p>Phase 2 - Voluntary Controlled and Community schools, is underway. There have been 204 returns from schools totalling 5,500 individual contracts. Each contract needs to go through a validation process. There are 1,400 offers remaining, 400 are ready to go and the decision has been made to put these on hold until new school year. There are 1,000 contracts with data issues that are in the process of being resolved by the team managing the process.</p> <p>Schools have 28 days from the date of the COT3 acceptance to action the payment to the individual through their payroll system. Payment to the school will be made via the school advance.</p> <p>Phase 3 - Voluntary Aided, Foundation, Free Schools & Academies, has just started and a communication has been sent to those concerned earlier this week.</p>	

	<p>There have been presentations of Term Time at the Finance Information Group and in response to comments the team that are managing the process are creating an FAQs page.</p> <p>Neil Willis asked whether information could be sent to HR Directors of a trust.</p> <p>Robin Goldsmith will inform the team that are managing the process.</p>	
5.	<p>Dedicated Schools Grant 2020-21 Outturn</p> <p>Karen Stone presented a paper.</p> <p>This final position was as forecasted and presented to the Forum members previously.</p>	
6.	<p>High Needs / Deficit Recovery Plan</p> <p>Karen Stone presented a paper.</p> <p>The plan is to update the modelling of High Needs numbers for the next 5-year placements based on trend.</p> <p>Karen will update the Forum on the modelling numbers, position of the High Needs commissioning contract tightening, and SEN sufficiency around the Capital Investment Programme, at the next meeting.</p> <p>A Mainstream top up review paper was included for information. The review has been launched and Headteachers have been invited to participate in a group to develop ideas around the Mainstream top up. For example, linking the EHCP process to an automated top up rate so there would be no future requirement to apply separately for funding and how funding could be issued to groups of schools to allocate based on the needs of the area.</p> <p>Karen will update the Forum in future meetings of the progress.</p> <p>Matt Dunkley reiterated that Kent's position on high needs is reflected nationally but the statutory override, which separates the DSG deficit from the main council accounts is only in place until March 2023. He suggested that in a future meeting it would be good to have a more detailed debate about the High Needs Block and how the deficit can/planned to be addressed. The SEN review commissioned by DfE is expected to be published at the end of June and hope to have an update for the next Forum meeting.</p> <p>Mark Tomkins asked whether the DfE are currently looking at the picture across the country of the issues surrounding the High Needs overspend.</p> <p>Matt discussed that the DfE are meeting with authorities with the highest percentage of their deficit to establish a recovery plan. Kent is not currently included within this.</p> <p>Celia Burton gave a presentation for the Inclusion fund.</p>	

	<p>Phase 1 Understanding the challenges. This was completed prior to the last Forum meeting.</p> <p>Phase 2 Research, co – production, development activity. This has been completed since previous presentation to the Forum. A draft publication of the Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education (CaTIE) has been actioned. In addition to the publication, training on the mainstream core standards has been provided to schools and The Effective Kent Project which focuses specifically on SEND learning behaviour training course has run. Nearing the end of the commissioning process for Inclusion Leaders and whole school approaches to nurture.</p> <p>The review of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Services is ongoing.</p> <p>Phase 3 Implementation of a CaTIE. This will begin with the development of inclusive leaders that can work with schools in finding where they require support to further improve inclusive practices. The countywide approach is intending to upskill and provide resources into both schools and within their locality so they can implement some of these practices. The expectation is that the CATIE strategy document will be published by the end of this academic year.</p> <p>Phase 4 Developing sustainability, a whole system model. This phase is not due to begin until September 2021 when it will be linked in with the high needs funding review.</p> <p>Jenny Ashley-Jones asked whether previously trained staff in peer review and KLEs can be utilised to avoid additional spend and make a saving.</p> <p>Celia mentioned that there is nothing to stop Kent Leaders of Education (KLEs) becoming Inclusion Leaders of Education (ILEs) but there might be further training requirements. The funding is to cover the release of staff from their role.</p> <p>Neil Willis asked whether the knowledge of SRPs in providing outreach was going to be utilised, as 10 year ago SRPs were given funding to provide outreach in their budget.</p> <p>Celia confirmed there was likely to be a separate SRP review.</p> <p>Sue Beauchamp asked if there are any plans to increase in the AP budget?</p> <p>Karen Stone mentioned this will need to be considered as part of the 2022-23 budget setting process.</p>	
7.	<p>Notional SEN</p> <p>Karen Stone presented the paper with short accompanying presentation</p> <p>To address historic inequalities in the allocation of the additional top up to fund the first £6k for those who are considered to have high incidence of SEN, changes were made to the notional SEN calculation in 2021-22 to equalise the additional top up for schools of a similar size.</p>	

	<p>A number of schools who have been significantly impacted by this change have have complained to the Local Authority and made representations to other SFF members. The Forum are being asked to consider whether there should be any actions taken to make a change for the 2022-23 Budget.</p> <p>Jenny Ashley-Jones shared concerns of a drop in funding for schools with an SRP and targets those that are most inclusive.</p> <p>Jenny Ashley-Jones, Annabel Lilley, Ben Cooper & Kate Le Page made the point that this funding assists Mainstream schools that are inclusive of children with higher needs, so children are not required to transfer to an alternative provision which can be more expensive to the Council.</p> <p>Concerns were raised as to the impact this may have on schools, and that schools could not be expected to gain funding in one area and then lose it in another.</p> <p>Kate Le-Page made the point that she is in favour of the approval of an EHCP triggering automated funding.</p> <p>Karen Stone made the point that the plan is to bring consistency around funding schools for the number of pupils exceeding the top up.</p> <p>The Forum agreed to return to this item at the next meeting.</p>	
8.	<p>DFE Consultations update</p> <p>Karen Stone briefed the Forum on the paper providing full details of recent consultations.</p> <p>Karen will provide an update once these are decisions made.</p>	
	<p>Next provisional meeting dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 July 2021 – cancelled meeting • To be confirmed for the end of Summer Term once the SEN review is published. • 14 October 2021 – 10.15am to 12:45pm • 26 November 2021 – Venue to be confirmed 8am to 12pm 	