

High Needs

Schools' Forum Date	21 st June 2017
Type of Decision	For decision
Background Documents	Schools Forum report 16 th March 2017
Author	Stewart King, lead commissioner for education and skills
Purpose of Report	To update the Forum on the development of a strategic plan for high needs and to seek guidance on key themes
Key Recommendations	The Forum is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• consider its role in overseeing the high needs programme• advise on consultation and engagement with schools, parents and other stakeholders• identify ideas to pursue
Resource Implications	The high needs block for 2017/18 total £57.2m and is likely to stay at the same cash level up to and including 2020/21

NB This paper will be supplemented by a presentation at the Forum meeting

1 Introduction

1.2 DfE consultation on a national funding formula (NFF)

On 14th December 2016 the DfE launched a consultation on the introduction of a national funding formula for high needs alongside the proposals for a national funding formula for mainstream schools. The consultation closed on 17th March. No announcements have been made on the outcome of the consultation.

Gloucestershire was a 'loser' on the formula proposals. As a consequence the likely position is a cash standstill over the period 2017/18 to 2020/21.

One of the important features of the national funding formula proposals was to ring-fence the Schools Block, removing the current flexibility to transfer funding between DSG blocks.

This paper assumes that the NFF for high needs will go ahead on something close to the proposal set out in the December consultation. This assumption is based on a

view that the formula proposals were, at least relative the mainstream NFF, uncontroversial.

1.2 The financial position in summary

Until 2016/17 spending has been contained within budget despite the pressures. We have not to seek agreement from the Forum, as has been the case in many local authority areas, to transfer funding from the Schools Block.

But as reported to the Forum in March the high needs block was overspent by £2.0m (3.7%) in 2016/17. The budget for 2017/18 agreed by the Forum in March allows for the impact of current trends thanks to a £1.3m cash increase in the allocation from DfE. The position is not sustainable for 2018/19 and beyond with spending pressures/rising trends right across the high needs block.

1.3 Strategic Plan

The DfE expects each local area to develop a strategic plan for high needs and has allocated funding to local authorities in order to create capacity. The allocation to Gloucestershire is £247,000. It will be a major piece of work to develop a plan that changes expectations, cultures and practices to both improve outcomes and contain spending within a budget that will be falling in real terms. The key capacity we have is:

- John Reilly, current interim Headteacher at Laker's Academy who will be working with us full time from September. John has a wealth of experience in headship at both primary and secondary level, knows the county well and understands the local cultures. John will be attending the Forum meeting and will share some initial thoughts
- The high needs programme will be my top priority. Depending on announcements on the NFF for mainstream schools I anticipate devoting more than 50% of my time to high needs
- Capacity from headteachers, SENDCOs, business managers, parents, LA officers and others
- Project management support

2 The current position

2.1 Current trends

The 'data dashboard' at Annexe A sets out a range of relevant data on Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), exclusions and SEND attainment and progress data. There is further information to add on:

- Nos of children identified on the school census as having SEND

- SEND educational outcomes – attainment and progress
- Special school places and occupancy
- Post 16 outcomes and provision
- Analysis of provision specified within EHCPs – proportion on 1:1 support etc
- No of EHCPs ceased and reduced

A more sophisticated analysis of EHCPs - numbers, age groups, primary need and cost – is in development. The analysis will also enable us to make a more robust assessment of the impact on the high needs budget if current practice continues.

But there are some clear trends:

- EHCPs are increasing, particularly for the 16-25 age group
- The demand is coming from schools rather than parents
- Placements in independent schools are increasing in number and cost
- Permanent exclusions from school remain very high

A simple conclusion from current trends is that radical changes will be needed in how we assess and meet needs and how we prioritise the available funding.

3 Progress to date

Developing a high needs strategy is a major piece of work. We have set up a programme with a number of workstreams. The programme incorporates or connects to a number of existing developments:

- GASH working group on Alternative Provision and Exclusions
- The SEND Strategic Implementation Plan
- The IRIS intensive service for young people (a joint project with health and social care – see section 5 and Annex C)

Actions to date include:

- Compiling a data stocktake (in progress)
- Identifying the necessary resources, including John Reilly
- Briefings for staff, the Joint Additional Needs Development Group etc
- Developing the programme workstreams
- Establishing ‘design principles’ for the programme. The Forum, schools, parents/carers etc may have views on these principles but I felt it was important to offer a view on what the end point might look like (Annex B)

The workstreams are:

- Data and Performance Management
- Alternative Provision and Exclusions
- In-County (complex needs)
- Inclusion in mainstream (Additional needs)
- Financial Management

- Post 16
- Capital investment strategy
- Inter-authority and partnership working
- Consultation and Engagement

4 Key issues

I will say more about the programme and some initial thinking at the meeting and I anticipate that Forum members will have views on priorities, lines to follow etc. But some obvious questions for the Forum are:

- What are the things we *have* to get right if we are to achieve the objective of improving outcomes and keeping within the budget?
- How should we be engaging schools? And other stakeholders?
- How does the Forum see its role and that of the sub-group? There is sub-group meeting scheduled for 2.00 pm on Wednesday 28th June. Depending on the outcome of the consultation on the introduction of a NFF for mainstream schools, oversight of the high needs block will be the Forum's prime function.

5 Enablers for the high needs programme

Forum members may find it helpful to be familiar with three developments that are likely to be critical if we are to achieve the aims of the programme:

- **IRIS**
This is a new service aimed at meeting the needs of our most high risk young people in-county in a flexible way that takes a highly individualised approach to care, therapeutic interventions, working with the family, residential provision and foster care. In the past the route to meeting the care and health needs of these young people has been through residential placements. But these placements have been high cost, inflexible and with variable outcomes. More detail on IRIS is presented at Annex C. It is a particularly important development for the high needs programme because the thinking on alternative provision with the Gloucestershire Association of Secondary Heads is based on a similar philosophy
- **Resource Allocation System (RAS)**
The RAS is a holistic and outcome focused tool to allocate additional support to pupils with SEND. It has been co-produced with parents/carers, Educational Psychologists, Advisory Teachers, SENDCos, Speech & Language Therapists, Special School Heads and Casework staff. The RAS is due to be implemented from September. The RAS process and timetable is detailed at Annex D
- **The restorative approach.**

Restorative Practice is an evidenced based approach which uses a core set of beliefs, principles and a way of being with people that builds and maintains healthy relationships, a sense of community and a shared sense of accountability.

It is about giving high levels of support and challenge to inspire people and communities to feel able to resolve their problems and shape their own futures.

There is evidence from elsewhere in the country that the restorative approach can have particular benefits for schools especially in terms of behaviour management and reducing exclusions for example.

A restorative programme is up and running in Gloucestershire and includes a pilot at a secondary school, Tewkesbury and in a couple of primary schools. The original programme is attached at Annex E.

Stewart King
June 2017