

Minutes - Sheffield Schools Forum

3.00-4.30pm, 26 September 2023, Learn Sheffield, Savile Street

Chair: Keith Crawshaw

Schools Forum Members:

Primary Heads Representatives

Nigel Brooke-Smith (Greystones)
Helen Kenyon (Pipworth)
Chris Holder (Lowfield)

Primary Governors

Alison Warner (Grenoside)

Secondary Head

Linda Gooden (King Edward VII)

Non-school Members

Mo Andrews, Pye Bank CE Primary
Stephen Betts, Learn Sheffield
Karen Simpkin, Early Years providers
Rafia Hussain/Lisa Smith, Trade Unions
James Smythe, Sheffield College 16-19
Sector

Academies

Keith Crawshaw (Sheffield South East Trust)
David Dennis (Tapton School Academy Trust)
Jim Dugmore (Peak Edge Academy Trust)
Chris French (Mercia Learning Trust)
Stacy McKay (Springs Academy)
Morag Somerville (Steel City Schools Partnership)

Special Academies

Joel Hardwick (Nexus Multi-academy Trust)

Special Schools

Aileen Hosty/Laura Rzepinski (Bents Green)
1 x vacant seat

PRU

Alan Richards (Sheffield Inclusion Centre)

Apologies: Mo Andrews, Stephen Betts, David Dennis, Jim Dugmore, Linda Gooden, Aileen Hosty, Joel Hardwick, Stacy McKay, Alan Richards, Laura Rzepinski, Morag Somerville, Alison Warner

Also in attendance: Cllr Dawn Dale, Chair of the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee; Andrew Jones, Director, Education and Skills; Amanda Murray, Education and Skills (notes); Mark Sheikh, Head of Service, Resourcing and Business Planning

Presenters: Helen Lomas, Service Manager, Family Hubs; Helen Mansfield, Resourcing Manger; Rose Ward, Head of Service SEND

Observers: Julie Justice, Resourcing and Business Planning, SCC

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

Introductions were made and apologies noted. No declarations of interest were made.

2. Previous meeting minutes/matters arising

Agreed as a true and accurate record. No matters arising.

3. Family Hubs

Further to a request from the Forum Chair, Helen Lomas provided an update on Family Hubs, summarised as follows:

- Sheffield was identified as a top tier authority and awarded Trailblazer status in December 2022, and we have submitted a delivery plan.
- We have received £5.2m of funding.
- We are working with health colleagues e.g. Start for Life is delivered by NHS colleagues.
- The vision is to enable access: Start for Life aims to be a single point of access for early help – post and perinatal.
- There will be a registered Family Hub in each locality and we are looking to co-locate with partners and would like to develop co-location alongside schools, health and voluntary/community organisations.
- A parent/carer panel has been set up.
- Organisations are applying for grants to become Family Hub network members.

Forum discussion can be summarised as follows:

- Cllr Dale clarified that the Start for Life model is focussed on 0-5 years, but that we should explain the process, and that we need to look at the family as a whole and communicate this better.
- Other partners can refer parents through the process. We are aiming to streamline the process and are developing an integrated portal.
- The ask of schools is to make connections and look at how schools can be involved in the wider offer in localities, and for schools to identify themes in localities.
- The Chair expressed concerns that this is less targeted than Sure Start: that we are spreading resources too thinly across the city rather than focussing on acute needs; and that the governance and decision-making is not clear on the diagram. The issue is how we ensure that we work together.
- It was suggested that a city centre hub would be easier to access than a locality hub and James Smythe suggested that the college may be able to help given its central location and transport links.
- We are working with libraries and need to work with others to encourage co-location.

The Forum **noted** the update and the recommendations around engaging in consultation, sharing information with key contacts, and linking into the strategy.

4. Independent Placements – Update on Expenditure

As requested at the February Schools Forum, Helen Mansfield and Rose Ward summarised the update provided on Paper 4:

- Expenditure on independent specialist placements (ISPs) has increased by £2m due to the increasing number of placements as well as inflation.
- The overall number of placements in special schools and ISPs has grown by 33% since 2017 (the proportion of placements in ISPs is in line with overall growth).
- The costs of ISPs are shown in the table in section 2 - £9.3m as at June 2023.

- The average cost of a placement is £70k and our numbers placed do not appear to be higher than other local authorities. However, special school places cost between £21-23k and integrated resource places cost £16-17k, so ISPs should only be used when deemed to be the correct provision.
- 45% of ISP placements are as a result of tribunals.

Forum discussion raised the following points:

- Our legal costs for tribunals are in addition to the cost information shared within the paper.
- Sheffield's success rate of tribunals in favour of the parent is 94-95% in line with the national average.
- The vast majority of tribunals are Section I – challenging the placement to move from mainstream to special, but we have a shortage of 200 special places.
- The vision needs to be more about local provision and mainstream schools need to be asked to deliver high quality provision.

The Forum noted the strategy to meet anticipated growth and the drive to increase IR and hub provision.

5. Pupil Referral (PRU) Debt Update

Mark Sheikh provided an update on the outstanding debt owed to the Sheffield Inclusion Centre (SIC) and asked for the Forum's support/agreement to progress this formally on behalf of the SIC and consider legal action if necessary:

- All as per Paper 5 - £422k of debt is due from 45 schools and academies, with the largest debt being £46k.
- The most persistent debt is historical – from 2016/17 to 2019/20.
- Since the last Forum update we have made progress recovering part-payment from the trust that had the largest debt at the time.

Forum discussion was as follows:

- We have written to schools/academies to chase these debts previously and we therefore need to take a firmer approach. We would also need to be clear on what actions we will take if the debts are not settled.
- If the debts are not settled, we need to be clear that the cost of write-off would impact the whole school system.
- The historic fee arrangement was contentious at the time, and we may need to remind schools/academies of the previously agreed fees.
- When writing to academy trusts ensure that the Chair and CEO is copied in.

The Forum agreed to the recommendation of pursuing these debts, taking into account the comments above.

6. Capital Update

Mark Sheikh presented Paper 7, which is to be read in conjunction with Paper 4 regarding the High Needs Allocation:

- 2022/23 is the first time that we have received a substantial level of High Needs Allocation investment (£6.7m and £7.1m in 2023/24).
- We have received DfE approval to a build an 80-place social emotional and mental health (SEMH) school and we have also secured a new free school in a joint bid with Barnsley.
- We have set an ambition to double IR provision in the city within five years and special-led hubs are also in scope of this development.
- We are seeking to improve and expand post-16 SEND provision.
- We are supporting two bids for alternative provision schools.
- ISP placements are ranging around 3.3% of the provision and the above developments should allow this ratio to be maintained.

Basic Need Allocation

The allocation overview for the next few years is set out at section 1.3. We will receive £26m in 2025/26, but it should be noted that we require approximately 1,300 more places and these will account for use of the majority of these funds.

School Condition Allocation

The paper provides an overview of the allocation - £3.6m for 2023/24. We still have a maintenance backlog estimated at £100m with £45m considered a priority.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Update

- 35 schools in Sheffield were built within the timeframe when this was used.
- Schools have carried out visual checks and so far, only one school has been identified as having RAAC – Abbey Lane and works to rectify this will be completed in December. Where required, additional assurance has been secured through engagement of structural engineers.

School Rebuilding Programme

Six out of ten schools submitted as part of the programme have been approved and these have been prioritised for re-build based on their condition.

The Forum noted the capital allocations and other updates as summarised above.

7. Early Years Rate

Mark Sheikh highlighted key points from Paper 6a:

- The Government has announced an extension to the Early Years Funding entitlement:
 - From April 2024 – all working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week.

- From September 2024 – all working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years-old can access 15 hours per week.
- From September 2025 – all working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years-old can access 30 hours per week.
- The above would mean expansion of the sector but doesn't cover the cost of delivery.
- The funding rates for 2023/24 are to increase with immediate effect as a result of a one-off Early Years Supplementary Grant and 100% of the increase is to be passed on to providers. The tables at section 3 of the paper show the increase in funding rates.
- The DfE is consulting on the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) and is looking to introduce an Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) as a proxy indicator to calculate funding.
- Indicative funding rates for the new EYNFF April 2024 have been published:
 - 2-year-old funding rate - £7.85.
 - Under 2-year-old funding rate - £10.70.

The Forum noted the above information regarding the increased funding rates and extended entitlement, the supplementary grant, the EYNFF consultation.

Paper 6b

The Forum members are asked to note the outcome of the consultation around the 2021/22 positive balance of £456k and the recommendation by the Early Years Working Group.

The Forum approved the recommendations:

- To pay all 3 and 4-year-old Funded Early Learning (FEL) providers a share of the £465k 2021/22 positive balances, based on their participation hours from 2022/23, subject to them still being open in autumn 2023.
- That any future net determined balances are added to the base hourly funding rate in the following financial year.

Karen Simpkin added that she feels the increase and decision around the positive balance have been fairly delivered, but the sector is still underfunded and that business rates are still a big issue. She also raised a concern that providers cannot afford to provide one-to-one support for SEND children.

Cllr Dale wrote to the Secretary of State earlier in the year to challenge the underfunding and will follow up a response.

8. AOB

None raised.

Date of next meeting: 18 December 2023, 3.00-5.00pm, Learn Sheffield, Albion House, Savile Street