

Schools Forum

High Needs Working Group Minutes

Date Tuesday 12 January 2022

Time: 10am – 12pm

Venue: MS Teams

Attended:

Kathy Roberts	(KR)	Head of 0-25 SEN Service
Charles Quaye	(CQ)	Principal Accountant
Jenny Adamson	(JA)	HT, Saffron Valley Collegiate
Roger Capham	(RC)	PACE Academy Trust
Theresa Staunton	(TS)	Early Years
Keran Currie	(KC)	SEN Locality Inclusion Project
Jonathan Driscoll	(JD)	SEN Data Manager
Sonal Desai	(SDe)	Area SEND Lead
Helene Greenidge	(HG)	John Ruskin College
Mark Southworth	(MS)	Locality SEND Support, Consultant Lead
Pam Sokhi	(PS)	Early Years Inclusion & Intervention Team Manager
Rob Veale	(RV)	HT, Atwood Primary Academy
CHAIR		
Lorraine Slee	(LS)	HT, Red Gates school
VICE CHAIR		

H Beck:

Note taker

Agenda Item	Title	Lead
1:	Welcome, Introductions and apologies	Chair
	RV welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies from Richard Charles	
2:	Minutes of the last meeting held on 17 November 2021	Chair
	All other actions have been completed and minutes agreed. ACTIONS outstanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide figures for the commissioned services – CQ/KR to follow up with RCB (response to be provided by end of February 2022) • Meeting to discuss the commissioning of further SALT provision – FB/LN/RV • Invite FB to Head Teachers meeting – SD • Provide performance measures and funding arrangements regarding CCG – RCB • Provide list of providers drawing funds from the HNB – CQ • Hold a discussion with CQ/KR to include Finance headline summary in the SEN data dashboard – JD 	

3:	Schematic diagram and explanation of roles and responsibilities within Croydon SEND department	KR
	<p>KR said everyone named in Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and all officers that support the work are FTE.</p> <p>RV asked what the head count is for the department as he calculated between 70 – 85 members who are staff within SEND.</p> <p>KR said the service is huge and that the bulk of staff are fulltime. There are part-time staff some of whom work different patterns.</p> <p>RV asked how long the post for the SEN Business Assurance Manager has been vacant.</p> <p>KR said this role is out for recruitment at the moment and the closing date is 21 January 2022. This is a key function in the service so it is crucial to get a person in post.</p> <p>RV asked who is fulfilling this role in the meantime.</p> <p>KR said the role has been shared and that the key essentials have been picked up. The finance and data strand are being picked up by Bridget Hamer who is acting up as a senior finance officer. KR said she will be staying in her post as Interim Head of Service SEND until July 2022 thus allowing Shelley Davies to advertise and recruit to the permanent post.</p> <p>RV referred to the SEND inspection and the challenges around EHCP review backlogs, and from his understanding it looks like the LA has a capacity of about 20 FTE EHCP co-ordinators, 2 senior practitioners and 2 SEND team leaders. He asked if KR felt she has enough capacity in order to address one of the key findings in the SEND area report.</p> <p>KR said the areas of pressure have been looked at in terms of the annual reviews. There is a temporary task force in place to build capacity there and this sits under Monique Morgan (MM), SEND Strategy and Improvement Manager, Education. The SEND service needs to be redesigned and reconfigured to reflect localities, the different strategies and elements of work.</p> <p>HG said she understands the pressure the advisors are under in terms of the EHCP reviews and said as a way forward, she would be amicable to work online with the EHCP.</p> <p>KR agreed this was a good idea and said that annual reviews continued to be worked on during lockdown. If the family and the parent are happy with this approach this is a really good way to take this forward. She has asked MM to put together a comprehensive paper on the position as it is at the moment, including the strategies to take this forward.</p>	

	<p>KR clarified that Anne Moore, Chief Educational Psychologist was still in post working for Octavo.</p> <p>LS asked what the position the Educational Psychology Service was in. Her school was told that some of the services they had wanted to buy in were no longer available due to staff shortages.</p> <p>KR confirmed that the Educational Psychology Service has staff storages and that this is a national problem. A new EP will be joining the service from 1 February 2022 and a current EP going on maternity leave. The service is advertising for staff as well as recruiting and retaining 2 trainee EPs.</p> <p>RV said it would be useful to have what the ideal structure is, showing the agreed structure against actual.</p> <p>KR said under Anne Moore's Service there is no outstanding vacancy but elsewhere there vacancies or FTE.</p> <p>RV asked if the schematic diagram is circulated to schools and Head Teachers.</p> <p>KR said this should be available as a local offer on the website and pointed out that it would be better for colleagues to see whole directorate in the schematic diagram e.g Fair Access Panel (FAP), Inclusions Services, Virtual School as these are part of the whole programme. Part of her work with Denise Bushay is around the Early Years strategy, capacity in schools and forward planning.</p> <p>JA said she can see this is wider than SEN but it would be great as a school leader if there was one place or portal to locate the information on who fits where in the diagram.</p> <p>KR said all structures are in this format and should be on the website.</p> <p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate where the staffing structures are placed on the LA website on the LA website – KR • Discuss with Shelley Davies the creation of a possible portal that will hold staffing structures – KR/RV 	
4:	Dictionary of acronyms	
	<p>RV thanked KR for pulling the list together.</p> <p>KR said adding acronyms following the meetings will make this a live reference document.</p>	

5:	Beckmead – a) Outreach impact (how does it tie in with locality work)	
	<p>KR said she had regularly requested an annual update on the delivery of Beckmead outreach. A paper received end of July 2022 lacked detail on impact so Beckmead was given a framework to fulfil. The 3 year contract for the outreach provision with is coming to an end either this financial or academic year. There is potential for a further 2 year extension. This will not be considered until a detailed impact and outcome assessment document is provided. In the meantime help and support is needed to manage suspensions for all the work that goes on, that the commissioned outreach is for i.e. Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) and SLD children and young people who come through FAP and other routes. She is in touch with Andy from Chaffinch Brook who has promised the report by the end of next week.</p> <p>KC asked if schools are still able to access the outreach support and if there was a particular person or contact.</p> <p>KR confirmed that outreach is still accessible and that this goes through Chaffinch Brooks.</p> <p>RV referred to the schematic diagram and asked KR who below her is in charge of that element.</p> <p>KR said though the commissioning and funding is high needs funding, the children and young people are managed through inclusion, SEND, FAP etc. This is partly within her remit but she works collaboratively with Sarah Bailey, Head of Access to Education who now heads up all of these areas.</p> <p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on whether the new contract or any potential extension is going to run from the 1st April or the 1st September 2022 – KR • Provide the key contact in Chaffinch Brook who deals with outreach support – KR 	
6:	Finance update	Charles Quaye
	<p>CQ said the initial High Needs grant allocation for 2021/22 from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) was £67.644m but this was later reduced to £67.106m due to the pupil numbers.</p> <p>Q3 cumulative overspend position shows a deficit of £28,327m at the end of March 2022. This shows a small deviation of £68k from the plan position of £28.259m.</p> <p>Chart (a) illustrates the in-year variance and shows the trend is flattening. The £4.1m in Q3 for 2022 is there in case of any surprise invoices.</p>	

He commends the Education Health Care co-ordinators and the tribunal team for the work they are doing, as the more parents are convinced their child's needs can be met in a special school, rather than in an independent school, the LA saves money.

Mainstream School Inclusion Funding includes the locality model which is referred to in point 5.

Chart (b) illustrates the position of the different schools. The reasons that Kensington Avenue Primary and Atwood Primary Academy are in the red is because of the extra funding they received for running the locality model. Both the Area Locality Leads (SD and KC) have been seconded to both schools respectively. Each school pays their wages and invoice the LA to cover these costs.

In contrast Norbury Manor Primary shows that not many children have tapped into the locality model. He will produce a future paper, for audit purposes, that will separate staffing costs from actual education costs. At the end of the financial year, he will demonstrate those children who have tapped into the locality model, thereby tracking the performance.

MS said Chart (b) is slightly misleading as it looks like Kensington and Atwood are spending lots of money on SEN students but this is recharge they agreed to, to host teacher salaries. He pointed out that Love To Communicate Southern Ltd is not a school. The money being paid is for SALT provision and this is divided across all schools. Some names are trusts not schools e.g. Collegiate Trust and this has around 4/5 schools involved with it. It is noted that there are not many schools taking more than their fair share.

SD is in agreement with MS and said this is more of a strategic approach. Schools are looking at innovative ways in supporting children and their needs.

CQ said the LA has the responsibility to show that the children are looked after. He will meet up with SD/MS to set up an invoice system.

SD said money might go through the trust but that there is paperwork allocated to that individual child that then sits with the funding. There is a clear process of what is expected and a higher accountability measure.

MS said the way the Croydon system is set up is to pay trusts and not individual schools. The registered suppliers are often a trust not an individual school and the only way to passport money to an individual school is through the trust, who then pass on the money to that school.

All schools will be part of LSS in September 2022 which will be the new way of working. There needs to be adequate funding for locality work from April 2022 into the next academic year.

CQ referred to Appendix (a) and said Line 1 is why there is a locality model. Not all children go to special or independent schools, some sit with mainstream schools.

Line 3 shows that special schools are overspending by £2.058m. The reason is that not enough money was put into the pot. The number of special school children moved from 821 to 945 children. There was no money to match the increase in pupils in special schools.

Line 12 shows that the forecast for 2021/22 is dropping and this is due to historical funding being paid. At the moment no more costs are being incurred in Beckmead.

Line 15 shows that £301k was spent in 2020/21 and this increased to £1.037m in 2021/22. Going forward, if more money needs to be added to Line 15, it will mean that the money should not be spent on Line 1 as this is the same pot. We will therefore not have money anywhere else to put into the locality model, otherwise this is not a saving strategy.

KR said the LA is currently at the transformation ways of working. It will take a while for the different ways of working to impact on Line 1. The LA needs to make sure it can evidence where the money is going for the children and young people. The current costs need to be factored in for all the existing community within EHCP as this is an ongoing cost. A funding review is taking place around special schools and there are elements that have to be addressed e.g. overspends on budgets this year and factor these into the proposals going forward.

RV said from his understanding through email conversations with KR/CQ/MS that there are tensions with the financial reporting. In terms of strategic actions to report back to Schools Forum, he asked if the plan for the roll out in September is in place and that are the actions clear for the roll out to be achieved so that he can inform Schools Forum of this.

Schools Forum have acknowledged the full and complete roll out of the locality project for September 2022. What, if anything, in terms of the financials for this project, needs to be reported back to Schools Forum in March 2022?

CQ said the strategy is finance driven and if you removed finance from the strategy and looked solely at the service, this would cause conflict between the Children and Family Act. Once the service presents a strategy, finance then look at the Financial Regulation to make sure it synchronises. He

reiterates that the locality model needs to go under Line 1 for it to fit into the budget and the DfE template.

CQ said there is a lot of information he is trying to catch up on since joining the Children's service. He was not aware of the start date of September 2022. If the strategy is to be implemented in September he will need to have a meeting with MS to look at the model and make sure things are set in place. As finance manager he needs to demonstrate why he is moving money from A to B.

MS said the implementation has to happen as we are committed in terms of the Schools Forum and there is also a desire by senior leaders to continue with the implementation. He needs to be persuaded that there is the right budget for this and will meet with CQ next week.

There was misunderstanding last year about the budget. There is enough money until April 2022 but we need to know there is enough in the LSS pot to manage the roll out. We need to make sure we calculate the historical EHCPs and move this from Line 1 to Line 15 for next year.

MS's worry is that Line 1 may not be able to support this, as it is effectively overspent, due to Early Years commitments. The locality SEND project is outside of Early Years but is reducing the number of EHCPs as well as paying for EHCPs being awarded. The whole premise of locality SEND support is that the schools know what budget they have and adhere to it. It is important to get this anomaly sorted before April 2022.

RV said there is tension and this does need to be sorted out as soon as possible to allow that free flow in September. Do we have any sense between LA officers of where LSS is going?

KR said this a secure and effective way forward for Croydon and that it was reflected in the Inspection as a really effective way of working.

The LA wants to drive this forward for meeting the needs of the SEND community in Croydon and this commitment has not changed. The LA are in a transfer state and the accountability sits with herself and SD who want to make sure the financial procedures fit in with audit, the DfE guidance and stays as far as possible within that budget set.

There are risks around this as the numbers, in terms of assessments and plans, are still rising. We need to get these processes mapped out so we have a clear financial management process that joins all the pressures together and fits within our statutory DfE guidance. The commitment is there to roll out LSS to all 8 localities in September 2022..

	<p>KR added that the special schools have not had enough focus and attention and said the ideal model will include investment at the early intervention support end as well as investment into specialist provision.</p> <p>TS referred to Appendix (a) and said although the current budget increases on Line 1, the forecast is to come in under budget not over budget. One would presume that this is because of the impact of the LSS. Going forward if the LSS is going to be the main the focus, it needs to move up from being a project to being how we deliver thus merging the lines. We still have the concept that you set a budget as much as you like, but as EHCP drive SEND there is a chance you will go outside of the budget. In past meetings the finance officer has always said that a balanced budget is needed to be set.</p> <p>RV referred to 6.1 - Maintained Special Schools and asked what the LA is factoring in as an appropriate demand percentage rather than 3% it budgets into next year.</p> <p>CQ said special schools have not had an increase for the past 4 years even though normal schools have had increases. In setting the budget for this financial year and after discussions with KR, he will alert the DfE that the top up for special schools needs to be increased. If finance is looking to put £3m into special schools, the money will have to come from somewhere.</p> <p>KR said the LA use a lot of data and forecasting but that it cannot always be 100% accurate. The next financial year shows growth in AV with 40 places confirmed and 20 places for St Nicholas.</p> <p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrange meeting to discuss Locality SEND budget and set up an invoice system that will allow the children to be tracked – SD/MS/CQ - Circulate audit queries to MS/SD for information – CQ 	
7:	SEN Data Dashboard	Jonathan Driscoll
	<p>JD gave an overview of his performance report which highlights what is going well, areas to watch out for and points out things that could be done better. The backlog reviews to be completed are being looked at by MM who is creating a plan to reduce them. He is also producing KPIs to show how many children or students with an EHCP have an overdue annual review. As more evidence is received it will show a decline over the coming months. A discussion with CQ/KR will be held to include a finance headline summary.</p> <p>CQ asked if children in FE colleges could be included in the presentation.</p>	

	<p>JD said Slide 4 includes a cohort of children in FE colleges' not just children funded by Croydon. He can meet with CQ separately to go through the figures to align with what CQ does.</p> <p>HG agreed with CQ request to see the data for Croydon students in FE colleges as this would help them see how the children perform against the rest of the providers in Croydon. She is concerned about the way that students with SEND are received against those do not have SEND. Lockdown has had an impact on all children and she feels the team will have to work harder with SEND children to catch up. It would be useful to have this data for the children in FE/mainstream 6th form in the next couple of years.</p> <p>JD has provided the Post-16 figures to KR who will circulate this.</p> <p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a discussion with CQ/KR to Include finance headline summary in the SEN data dashboard – JD • Meet with CQ to go through the figures with regard to Croydon children in FE colleges – JD • Circulate Post-16 figures to HG - KR 	
8:	SEND Inspection feedback	KR
	<p>The letter circulated outlined the inspections findings, including areas of strength and requirements for further improvement. This is being reviewed through the SEND board and Forum. A virtual meeting end of January 2022 will look at the learning from this, the priorities needed to move forward and review the SEND strategy. At the moment the team are looking to interview for a dedicated clinical officer who will be a permanent fixture within the system.</p> <p>RV, on behalf of the High Needs Working group, wanted to relay his thanks to KR and her team for achieving a positive outcome for the local area inspection. Well done to all.</p> <p>KR said the local area came together and LA is looking to build on this way of working.</p>	
9:	16 – 25 Pathways	KR
	KR said the demand is there and is growing as young people do well in their different settings. The outcome of a short meeting with Croydon College which looked at what their offer for September 2022 was, shows there is potential for more young people to remain within local colleges.	
10:	Addington Valley Academy (AVA)	KR
	Nothing more to report.	

11:	Tribunals	
	<p>KR said she is aware of 3 hearings going ahead this week and will have an update at the next meeting.</p> <p>RV said it would be good to invite Richard Charles back in the summer for an update on tribunals.</p> <p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite RC to give an update on tribunals in the summer term – KR 	
12:	Early Years strategy	
	<p>PS said there was no paper to present as the review is underway. Meetings taking place involving wider teams and professionals e.g. health, commissioning are helping to bring the strategy together. A consultation paper should be ready for this month.</p> <p>KR said that most of Early Years sits under Denise Bushay's remit and that she will be carrying out a complete review including the Early Years strategy. Several meetings and workshops have led to a draft that will come out for comment, then to full consultation with a timeline for publication in April 2022. KR is keen, when redrafting the SEND strategy that an Early Years focus is included and has asked for input from TS.</p> <p>TS said she is happy to support KR. She would like to see the Early Years part of SEND presented at every meeting. The task and finish paper is part of the Early Years review. The paper focuses on health but an education focus to include Early Years data needs to be included.</p>	
13:	Update on Special Need School Funding arrangements	KR
	<p>The review is underway. The special school Heads are aware the review is about money and finance but it also needs to include quality and sustainability. Moderation meetings and visits to all the special schools have been carried out in July 2021 and information has been collated. The framework, template and bands are in place. Currently modelling of the financial implications is taking place.</p> <p>PS said she is looking at a review for specialist nursery provision and the numbers, in light of cuts to transport and the impact this has had on take up provision for the coming year. She will meet up with LS/KR/Louise Needham and Sue Wiseman at Winterbourne to look at attendance.</p> <p>LS said she supports PS and that she is finding the neediest children are not provision. This will have a long term effect and impact on general achievement across the borough. She is aware that it is not statutory to provide transport but if the LA are looking</p>	

	<p>at achievement for those needy children they need to look at what the future holds for these children.</p> <p>KR said Early Years transport for SEND is not statutory. It becomes statutory at the age the children go into reception and is statutory up to the age of 16. The issue of post-16 then arises as it becomes non-statutory. The report will show decisions taken and the impact of the decision e.g. the provision and the children involved.</p> <p>RV said the tension would then be that it be the LA decision to dip into general funds to pay for transport.</p> <p>KR said all transport comes through the general fund and is not part of High Needs or DSG.</p>	
14:	AOB	
	None.	

Meeting Finished at: 12.04pm

NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY 2 March 2022, 10am – via MS Teams