

Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 7th October

Members Present: Jolyon Roberts Theresa Staunton
 Markie Hayden Kate Lanning
 Clare Cranham Julie Evans
 Dermot Mooney Gillian Larocque
 Chris Andrew Jenny Aarons
 Dan Bowden Stephen Hehir
 Dave Harvey Maryssa Dako
 Sue Lenihan Keran Currie

Observers Present: Jenny Bartlett Priya Pereira
 Charles Quaye Cllr Joseph Lee
 Cllr Amy Foster Denise Bushay
 Alfred Donkor Debbie Jones

Apologies: Shelley Davies, Sharon Hemley, Fiona Robinson, Nick White, Dean Brewer, Tyrone Myton

Elected Chair: Jolyon Roberts
Elected Vice Chair: Gill Larocque

Clerk: Mori Bates

Item	Detail	Lead/Action
1.	Welcome & Apologies	JR
	Apologies received by MB from SD, SHem, FR, NW, DBre and TM	
2.	Minutes & Actions – Meeting 10th June 2024	JR
	Minutes, actions, and matters arising from last meeting 10 th June 2024 Summary of comments made in reference to the previous minutes, including a review of the actions: 2.1 From February '24 minutes: Under Q3/A3, relating to children under the category of Support for Inclusion/Home Education, KR was to circulate information requested around this – ACTION KR – (EDIT) ACTION PP . PP will take over KR action and circulate data. 2.2 From June '24 minutes: Under 4.18, SP will circulate the questionnaire feedback on SALT within authority – ACTION SP (EDIT) ACTION SHem . SHem will take over SP action and circulate	PP SHem

	<p>information.</p> <p>a) Clerk also amended other errors with formatting, phrasing and SPAG.</p> <p>2.3 Addition: In relation to the above action, JR will forward relevant emails to SHem. ACTION JR</p> <p>2.4 Addition: DH queried whether there was a deadline for MNS action as it did go to cabinet where a decision appeared to have been made to form partnerships for the remaining 'stand alone' MNS. DBu indicated that the Executive Mayor agreed a recommendation of a soft federation, whereby the governing body of Crosfield and Selhurst form a soft federation with a primary school, academy trust or special school through a service level agreement by January 2025. By forming a federation, there should be a benefit to both nurseries, but there is a question about whether the MNS are in a financially stable position to undertake this suggestion. ACTION – EYWG/CQ: Paper on the MNS finances to be brought to the next Early Years Working Group, due to be on 21st November.</p>	JR
3.	Membership	JR
	<p>3.1 Membership was reviewed by the forum, indicating the need for three further academy representatives, a nursery governor and an alternate for special schools.</p> <p>3.2 It was noted that there needed to be a drive for representation across all areas of education and the alternates for members.</p>	
4.	Election of Chair & Vice Chair	DBu
	<p>4.1 A self-nomination for the role of chair was made by JR prior to the meeting.</p> <p>4.2 MH nominated GL as vice chair, which the nomination was seconded by CC and MD. GL agreed to stand as vice chair.</p> <p>4.3 The forum voted on both and the result was unanimous. JR and GL were elected as chair and vice chair respectively. It was also noted that there should be consideration for future years and what the forum's position will be in terms of chairs and vice chairs.</p> <p>4.4 The forum voiced thanks to TS for her service in a vice chair position as she continues chairing the Early Years Working Group.</p>	

5.	SALT Update	CQ
	<p>5.1 AD presented a paper titled, 'DSG SEND Therapies Contract Resources Report' to provide the forum with an update on the contract and its current position. The papers recommendation was to split the delivery of therapies in Croydon into two distinct areas – one funded and organized by the LA and a statutory service run by CHS.</p> <p>5.2 The main pressure on the current service is the escalation in the number of EHCPs, specifically an increase of 67% between 2018 and 2024 from 2,963 cases to 4,960 with no increase in budget to match rising numbers. PP added the numbers now currently stand at around 5,003 which represents about 10% of Croydon's total pupil numbers.</p> <p>5.3 Schools that were visited recently have reported a strain on resources and a delay in receiving the support required for SALT. The concern has been shared with the CHS and meetings will be ongoing throughout the consultation and engagement period.</p> <p>5.4 From April '25, the proposal is that CHS will deliver a comprehensive, non-statutory, borough-wide service which will include universal, targeted and specialist therapy services for all children and young people aged 0-18 and the LA would deliver a separate offer which would add capacity.</p> <p>5.5 Table 1 showed the general overview in the differences between the ICB Funded Universal Offer and the DSG Funded Statutory Offer and the responsibilities of each party for providing support.</p> <p>5.6 The proposal is to use a cluster model where there are five individual clusters with schools in each area being served by a set provider to that cluster. The idea is that schools in each cluster will be able to influence the prioritisation of cases, ensure a quicker response time and enhance outcomes.</p> <p>5.7 Members of the forum requested that the clusters be readjusted, especially given that CA mentioned the pupil numbers will be significantly bigger in cluster 1 under 4.2. It was suggested that there may be scope to align the clusters with that of the LSS which has three main clusters with eight subdivisions. CllrAF also pointed out that there appeared to be Shirley North and Shirley South in cluster one, with Shirley in Cluster 2. The Chair agreed to review the cluster distribution in post-meet with AD and Shem with a view to establishing a clear match up with LSS. ACTION: Consider matching therapies clusters with LSS</p> <p>5.8 Concern was voiced about any proposal to reduce the distribution of the geographical clusters as five providers would need to be sourced with this proposal and the number could then drop to two or three. It also needs to be considered what will happen if one of the providers collapses – five or more clusters gives the proposal resilience.</p>	Post meet

5.9 AD went on to add that the funding would be allocated proportionately to each cluster based on the amount of EHCPs they represent, with a 5% deprivation weighting being applied to cluster 1 as explained in 4.1.

5.10 The Chair was had met with Matthew Kershaw, Chief Executive of Croydon Health Services NHS Trust since 2018 and Croydon's Place Based Leader for Health. During the discussion, it was reiterated that there isn't any kind of real service being delivered under this contract – MK had received a reported that showed 17 posts supporting this contract for mainstream schools yet there do not seem to be any schools receiving support.

5.11 The new contract takes on a 3 + 1 + 1 approach with a break clause built into it so that we can get out of the contract.

5.12 It was noted that Croydon has been fined in SEND tribunals a number of times for not providing the therapies service that it should be. This further delay is unconscionable;

5.13 KC added that in 2020, the CLSS was created with the commission of SALT, making it important for CLSS and SALT to unify in order to support our children. It should be noted that around 7,000 children without an EHCP are being supported through the CLSS.

5.14 DBU stated that there would also be a COVID factor playing a part in increasing the number of children with additional needs or an EHCP.

Q1: JE: Is OT support not being offered through the contract? (As it is not shown in Table 1.)

A1: AD: The discussions are ongoing for how all therapies can be offered.

Q2: JB: What conversations have been had to define the support?

A2: AD: Conversations about how the focus of service should be statutory, meaning that without an EHCP, they won't be able to provide support.

5.15 AD explained that we are on the point of going out to tender with this new proposal and an invitation to tender will go out in due course as there are providers that would like to bid on the proposal.

Q3: DM: In the tender, what are we likely to be getting from it in terms of support, mentoring and guidance?

A3: AD: We will ask suppliers to submit their own proposals that will sit alongside the universal offer of the CHS to assist with the capacity.

5.16 The Chair stated that it is not a universal offer if it only caters to those children with an EHCP and will not meet all the needs that this borough has. Based on the amount of money outlined in this contract, Headteachers or SENCo's will still have to choose which families to help under the contract and funds currently allocated into independent SALT spend by schools will have to continue.

5.17 It was also noted by GL that if the current offer from the CHS is

	<p>inadequate, then it may not be long before the universal offer becomes overstretched. If one is not delivering now, but it will be in April, it comes into question as to how we can ensure the other will be able to cope in the absence of nothing.</p> <p>5.18 In reference to the fines from SEND tribunals, MD queried that why, from a legal perspective, the schools are being fined when it is the NHS that is not supplying the therapies that it should be.</p> <p>5.19 Based on recommendation #3, the members of forum voted, with 12 members voting yes, and 1 voter abstaining.</p> <p>5.20 AD asked if there were individuals that would be willing to sit on the tendering panel, to which KC and SHeh agreed to do so. ACTION: KC and SHeh to join tendering panel</p>	<p>KC and SHeh</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>DSG Outturn Report for 23/24</p>	
	<p>6.1 CQ presented a paper on the DSG Outturn Report for 23/24. The total allocated to Croydon was £428.3m, where £244.3m went to our academies, making the total amount allocated to the local authority maintained school £184m.</p> <p>6.2 The Safety Valve programme allowed the LA to receive £3.29m and then an additional cash injection of £1.19m into the high needs block.</p> <p>6.3 CQ then drew the forum's attention to Table 5 – Position Audit (Croydon's Performance as at 31/03/2024), in particular, line 13 – the Overall DSF Deficit Balance at the end of financial year. This showed that by 26/27 Croydon is are projected to have a credit balance of - £0.212m, thus clearing this deficit.</p> <p>6.4 It was noted that in Table 1, the allocation to the High Needs Block has risen from £61.24m in 20/21 to £81.783m in 23/24 that CQ said was showing a positive projection.</p> <p>6.5 CC queried who keeps track of the numbers coming through to us. DBu confirmed that there is a data team that analyses the figures.</p> <p>Q4: DBo: What have been some of the drivers to reduce the High Needs Budget?</p> <p>A4: CQ: There has been some pre-planning going ahead that is helping to combat this and the number of children in the independent sector is stabilising as well.</p> <p>6.6 TS reminded the forum that the Safety Valve agreement came in to clear a debt and it was stipulated that the deficit would not be applied to the authority. It could be agreed that the deficit is diminishing, however, this is partially due to the fact we are putting pressure on providing a service by being encouraged to reduce our budget. Also we must remember that as part of the agreement our mainstream schools are having to contribute financially to reduce a deficit that is not of their</p>	

	<p>making;</p> <p>Q5: SL: When will the Safety Valve agreement end? A5: CQ: It is projected to end after 26/27.</p> <p>6.7 It was also mentioned that there should be additional information into the distribution of the TPAG which CQ agreed to look into.</p> <p>Q4: DH: Of the other authorities with a Safety Valve agreement, have any of them opted out? A4: DJ: We cannot opt out of the agreement. We are working hard to ensure that it works. Without the agreement, we would be in a much harder position.</p> <p>6.8 The recommendations of the paper were noted by members of the forum.</p>	
7.	Update from Schools' Forum Working Groups	
	<p>7.1 Updates were received from the working groups as follows</p> <p>a) Early Years – No meeting took place. b) Schools Block. No meeting took place. c) High Needs – No meeting took place</p>	
8.	Any Other Business	All
	8.1 No AOB raised	

Meeting Adjourned: 11:30am
Date of next meeting: Monday 4th November
F9, Town Hall