

Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 10th June

Members Present: Jolyon Roberts Julie Evans
 Fiona Robinson Dan Bowden
 Chris Andrew Dave Harvey
 Theresa Staunton Sue Lenihan
 Tyrone Myton

Observers Present: Kathy Roberts Cllr Amy Foster
 Cllr Maria Gatland Cllr Joseph Lee
 Sarah Bailey Jenny Aarons
 Charles Quaye Alfred Donkor
 Shelley Davies Shelley Prince

Apologies: Dermot Mooney, Keran Currie, Markieu Hayden, Gillian Larocque, Kate Lanning, Maryssa Dako

Chair: Jolyon Roberts
Vice Chair: Theresa Staunton

Clerk: Mori Bates

Item	Detail	Lead/ Action
1.	Welcome & Apologies	JR
	<p>Declarations of interest – none.</p> <p>It was noted that political members and officers were restricted as to what they can say on particular matters in this meeting, given the upcoming general election.</p> <p>Upon review of the membership, MB confirmed that we have received self-nominations for the three academy representatives (Jenny Aarons, Sarah Hunter and Dean Brewer) and, given that there are three vacancies under this category, it was proposed that they be accepted as members of Schools' Forum.</p> <p>An application was also received by Stephen Hehir as a Special Schools representative. It was agreed that he can be an alternate, should either JE or FR be unable to attend.</p> <p>There were no objections voiced in regards to the membership proposal, so the motion was carried.</p>	

2.	Minutes & Actions – Meeting 26th February 2024	JR
	<p>Minutes, actions, and matters arising from last meeting 26th February 2024</p> <p>Summary of comments made in reference to the previous minutes, including a review of the actions:</p> <p>2.1 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 – COMPLETED</p> <p>2.2 Under 3.5, it was referenced that we were on track to reach the targeted overspend of £725K set out for us by the DfE. JR queried if this was correct, to which CQ confirmed that, as of date of this meeting, this is accurate.</p> <p>a) Clerk also amended other errors with formatting, phrasing and SPAG.</p>	
3.	Virtual School Annual Report	SB
	<p>3.1 SB provided the Forum with the Virtual School Annual Report, following the agreement from the members to continue providing annual funding of £750K. This, along with funding from other sources, has allowed the Virtual Schools to support approximately 350 children of school ages and another 350 Post 16.</p> <p>3.2 The team have looked at the outcomes for CLA in Croydon Virtual School compared to benchmarks. Over time, the KS2 results for 2023 across reading, writing and maths have increased across the board, specifically by 8.4% for reading, 1% for writing and 20.1% for maths. For KS4, there have been similarly improvements with published stats showing an increase between 2020 and 2022.</p> <p>3.3 Looking at the data for KS5, the drop of Level 1/2 qualifications percentage may have dropped from 17 to 11.11%, but this could be because the virtual school did not have many undertaking this type of qualification.</p> <p>3.4 SB reported that there have been no permanent exclusions of any CLA in 2022/23. It was also noted that the attendance PA in Croydon Virtual School was 21% for the year, compared to the 20.6% average for the CLA cohort nationally. This will also be an area to focus on in the next academic year.</p> <p>3.5 Virtual School is also enforcing the use of PEP (Personal Education Plan) - which is a tailored record of the CYP's education with a focus on the voice of the child. PEPs have also been used to support incarcerated individuals of school age. These plans enforce that the money follows the</p>	

child as the Virtual School will only receive funding upon the completion of a PEP.

3.6 The funds received from Schools Forum has predominantly been spent on staffing for Virtual School in order to ensure that every child in the cohort has a case worker working to support them. SB confirmed that there are 23 individuals in the team, including herself who work on the cases, conducting visits and ensure the needs of the child are being met.

3.7 The Chair drew the attention of Forum back to the KS4 outcomes in order to emphasise the importance of the Virtual School. Going back to 2019, the percentage of 5 GCSEs grade 9-4, including English and maths, was approx. 4% of which has gradually increased year on year to 24.44% by 2022.

Q1: JR: In relation to the KS4 outcomes, are the working practices going to create a similar turnaround year on year?

A1: SB: This is a challenging situation, and we have to remember that a large portion of the cohort being placed into care are mid-GCSE year. Most commonly year 9, ages thirteen and fourteen. However, I would expect that for 5+ GCSE Grade 9-4, the percentage will eventually plateau, but still remain above the national average.

SD: One cohort can also be entirely different to the next and we follow the children throughout primary school, secondary school and Post 16.

3.8 CllrMG voiced thanks to Forum for their continued support for the Virtual Support and looked after children.

3.9 In relation to absences, SB confirmed that the team now has a live, direct feed on the CLA cohort, meaning that data can be pulled from the school management system to help work on attendance.

3.10 KR also noted that regarding EHCPs and the connection to PEPs, there has been a great improvement in their completion partially because of this crossover.

Q1: CQ: Looking at the KS2 outcomes, is there any reason why the writing percentage was lower than that of reading and maths – is this a result of technology and electronic tablets?

A1: SB: The majority of these children are supported by individuals with primary school training, especially within phonics etc.

CA: With writing, we have to remember that it can also be experiential and there are external factors like dyslexia or motor skills. We should also acknowledge that this could be an impact of COVID in that writing is not a skill that can be taught virtually or online.

3.11 Members of the Forum noted the recommendations of the report.

4.	SALT Update	SP/AD
	<p>4.1 SP and AD jointly presented an update on the situation relating to the Therapies contract. SP reminded the Forum that at their October meeting, a rise of 25% in needs for SALT was shown with a further projected rise of 25% in the future. A vote was taken to give the element of the contract that was funded from DSG a 25% uplift.</p> <p>4.2 Since October, SP has met with the ICB to increase the contract value, of which following this, we were in a formal consultation period.</p> <p>4.3 The health service operates similarly to schools and the council, relying on the budget and additional funding. This should have been received in January but was not actually received until April.</p> <p>4.4 The paper presented showed the potential options we can undertake in order to mitigate the challenges.</p> <p>4.5 The service that we want to procure will focus solely on the schools to find a provider that will work alongside them. Schools have previously queried the reliance of having just one provider and the pressure this would have on capacity. In order to address this, AD confirmed that the team has looked at the various commissioning contract models and framework agreements, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of each option.</p> <p>4.6 The options reviewed were as followed; a lead provider model, a framework agreement, a locality model and insourcing – the advantages and disadvantages were outlined within the paper to provide an insight into each option.</p> <p>4.7 AD added that the recommendation/preferred method would be to adopt a mixed model and the Forum's input would be required in assessing bids for this work.</p> <p>4.8 SP explained that clinical governance is key where the therapies contract is concerned, but there is a disparity with the plan. Any of the options could help pin down the contract. We have to ensure that we utilise available resources and time. It was mentioned that fewer providers would be beneficial whilst simultaneously meeting the needs and demand.</p> <p>4.9 However, AD and SP emphasised that one preferred option does not mean that we will only explore that one option because it may not be suitable for all the parties involved. If necessary, in the next procurement phase, we can go through a list of preferred providers in order to make sure the information is obtained. Each provider will then be held to account over the terms and regulations.</p> <p>4.10 For clarity, under 1.4 of the paper, it was queried as to whether there was a contribution to funding coming from the health service, given that Forum had voted to raise their contribution by 25% on the assumption</p>	

that the health service would do the same. SP confirmed that the health funding element remains, in that between £1.2m and £1.4m comes from the health service but has not been raised as yet despite high level requests to do so. The funding style was compared to presenting two halves from different areas as a full complete circle.

4.11 SP is in talks with CHS in order to ascertain how it can work alongside the education model and advocating for Croydon. This decision is made by the ICB and Croydon has one of the highest populations of children and also a vast amount of EHCPs within the borough, meaning the decision will take time.

4.12 It is unlikely that the contract will be 'switched on' by September, however, there is a plan to impose a three month mobilization period after the contract is agreed upon.

4.13 The Chair commented that the paper touched upon the possibility that the cost of administration for the contract and compliance might well be a significant part of the cost of the contract, meaning less money for actual 'hands on' therapy work. SP stated that, ideally, a small proportion of funds could be spent to administration. However, it could be up to or around 20%, but should not be considered as lost funds. The money would be ensuring that compliance is enforced.

Q2: DH: The paper mentioned that there was a consultation period with key stakeholders – who were these individuals?

A2: SP: A number of key stakeholders were contacted, both in face to face settings and virtually, consisting of parent carer organisations, the previous chair of the High Needs Working Group. We made sure to speak with a wide range of key players, including the use of a questionnaire that was sent directly to the schools. Many members present contested this.

Q3: DH: Relating to the insourcing model, is the higher cost related to better terms and conditions for those staff employed under the contract?

A3: SP: Where we are outsourcing, the market will determine a salary and there are potentially higher premiums in order to meet the needs of the children.

JR: But the cost of the [LGPS](#) itself will be significant if the contract is insourced.

4.14 SP went on to explain that the mixed model is a combination of the factors to create a tailored contract. There would be a level of consistency that we will allow us to build resilience.

4.15 There was a general notion that there is no option that could be worse than the current situation as at present are not meeting the needs of the children and the current contract has been shown to have many failings. Therefore, any of the proposals appeared to be an improvement on the current position.

Q4: TM: Is the demand for the therapies going to be greater than what we are putting into the pot?

A4: SP: The aim is to manage the expectation, but this contract may not

	<p>immediately fix the problem. We will have the same funding as before, and it is important to remember that the therapies contract is not just about SALT. The main issue will be that we cannot guarantee how many children could come through the doors requiring the therapies in the coming years.</p> <p>4.16 The attention of Forum was brought to the recommendations on the paper. The members of Schools Forum acknowledged the report, but also need further information on what particular methods will look like in terms of the specification.</p> <p>4.17 SP indicated that we will move forwards with the procurement based on the feedback connecting to the specification. When we get to the assessment stages, the contract will then be reviewed again.</p> <p>4.18 SP will circulate the questionnaire feedback – ACTION SP</p>	SP
5.	Proposed Methodology for Distribution of the Capital Fund for Mainstream SEND Provision	CQ
	<p>5.1 The Chair explained that in the growth budget set for this year and last year there is funding for the provision of equipment to provide children with the support they need whilst an EHCP is being created. There is a need to think about the method in which this money will be distributed.</p> <p>5.2 CQ added that this money is for Schools' Block settings, but the schools are not claiming for this money. The fund is designed to enforce and enhance inclusion for the pupils which supports the authority's action plan.</p> <p>5.3 SD stated that the funds are a set amount and we cannot go over this amount. Therefore, there is a need to create a series of criteria points to make sure that the process for distribute is fair.</p> <p>5.4 There was a suggestion to move the funds into the Locality SEND service (LSS) for schools to reclaim monies spent. The next step is to focus on determining a method of distribution, so we are reviewing cases of good practice and innovation.</p>	
6.	Update from Schools' Forum Working Groups	
	<p>6.1 Updates were received from the working groups as follows</p> <p>a) Early Years – Dates were moved due to half term and the meeting took place on the 6th June. Minutes are being reviewed. TS said there is still a SENIF funding pot that needs to be utilised and distributed to help our 2YOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is also still an issue regarding the 2YO funding, with a prediction that this will be short. - CQ reiterated that a reconciliation has been sent to TS that was 	

	<p>balanced to the penny from Oracle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TS explained that there is information coming in from both Oracle and Synergy, but the settings are not receiving the money from the DfE. The shortfall will only grow if the budge does too. <p>b) Schools Block. No meeting took place.</p> <p>c) High Needs – Lots of papers were reviewed and MS is currently organising a task force for funding on Early Years LSS.</p>	
7.	Any Other Business	All
	7.1 DSG training is due to take place in September for the new members of Forum to undertake.	

Meeting Adjourned: 11:40am
Date of next meeting: TBD September/October 2024
F10, Town Hall

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