

Agenda Item 12

TITLE	SEND Strategy and High Needs Block Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 14 October 2020
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This reports forms part of regular reporting to Schools Forum, informing areas of statutory decision making and improving visibility and consultation on wider Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial matters.

RECOMMENDATION

Schools Forum is asked to note the content of the report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report provides Schools Forum with an update on the SEND Strategy and High Needs Block Deficit Management Plan.

The SEND strategy is developing and on track as per the published timeline. A draft is expected to be ready for consultation following the Task & Finish group meeting on the 20th October and the aim is to have the SEND strategy and associated action plan to be signed off by the end of November.

The report however recognises the impact of covid-19 on progress in some areas and has stalled the commencement of a number of other workstreams. Against the backdrop of an increasing number of children and young people with EHCPs, the scale of challenge to deliver a sustainable financial position for the SEND in Wokingham continues to be heightened.

SEND Strategy & High Needs Block Update

01. Purpose of the Report

This report provides Schools Forum with an update on the SEND Strategy, associated improvement actions, and High Needs Block activity.

02. Recommendation

Schools Forum is asked to note the contents of this report.

03. Background

In March 2020, an update on the longer term improvement program associated with SEND services across Wokingham was presented, in conjunction with the consultation on the 2020/21 High Needs Block budget.

At that time, a significant programme of work was planned for the coming financial year, taking forward actions that supported both service improvement and the DSG deficit management plan.

Since then, due to the impact of covid-19 and pressures across the system during this difficult time, progress has inevitably slowed in some areas.

This report provides an update to Schools Forum on current position and sets out the priority actions being taken forward.

03. SEND Strategy

The SEND strategy is developing and on track as per the timeline shown below.

Based on engagement so far, and in the light of the strategic priorities and initial work on action planning, some key lines of enquiry have been developed to help guide work in relation to data and needs analysis to support the SEND Strategy. This work compliments additional work in relation to data and needs analysis, which will help with general context setting and understanding the key issues and challenges relating to SEND to be addressed in the Strategy.

A draft is expected to be ready for consultation following the Task & Finish group meeting on the 20th October and the aim is to have the SEND strategy and associated action plan to be signed off by the end of November.

Timeline

We are here

Work Areas	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Discovery and prep	Discovery								
2. Data, research and analysis		Information gathering and research into best practice		Benchmarking, needs data analysis, cost analysis		Local needs analysis developed and completed by end September, feedback and consultation in October			
3. Engagement			Task and finish group interviews	Engagement with service leads, managers, strategic partners and SEND stakeholders	Coproduction and engagement activities to inform development of consultation draft Engagement with stakeholders, senior partners and elected Members on pre-consultation draft		Engagement on local needs analysis from key stakeholders		
4. Drafting			First draft prep	Drafting begins	FIRST DRAFT COMPLETE	Revisions (3 Consultation draft)		FINAL DRAFT reflecting consultation outcomes	FINAL VERSION delivered
5. Consultation and approval				Consultation planning	Consultation preparation and readiness	Development of draft for consultation	Consultation period (3 months including month for approval by appropriate decision-making bodies)		
						Engage with stakeholders on development of consultation draft	Start formal consultation draft policy Revisions and responses	Revisions and responses Submission to decision-making Committees	Strategy Approval by decision-making bodies

Data and Performance Reporting

A SEND Dashboard has been developed to ensure visibility and regular tracking of key information.

20 week timescales are on a cumulative increase and the service continue to work towards improving these, August figures 80%.

WBC have a total of 1211 EHCPs recorded for August.

- Number of EHCPs in August 2019 = 1002
- Number of EHCPs in August 2020 = 1211
- Increase of 209 plans = 21% increase

Primary need/diagnosis as recorded on Capita ONE is as follows:

ASD = 41%

SEMH = 20%

Moderate Learning Difficulty = 9%

Severe Learning Difficulty = 8%

Speech, Language Communication Needs = 8%

EHC Plans issued within timescale:								20 weeks timescale Benchmarking 2019:	
	2019	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	YTD 2020		
20 weeks	9%	95%	78%	86%	70%	80%	60%	National	58.7%
30 weeks	33%	5%	22%	9%	22%	20%	16%	Stat Neighbours	61.5%
40 weeks	15%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	11%	South East	46.4%
50 weeks	7%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	10%	Reading	48.9%
Over 50 weeks	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	W Berks	84.5%
								Bracknell	61.1%

04. **Update on Settings and Services Funded from the High Needs Block**

Mainstream

The planned review of funding for mainstream top-up arrangements has not yet commenced as a result of covid-19 related programme slippage. Scope and timeline of this work will now be reconsidered as part of a refresh of the management action plan.

Resource Bases

The funding review of resource base provision was stalled by covid-19 activity but has recommenced and is progressing well. This sits alongside a review of all resource base provision which is taking place. Schools will be engaged in the ongoing work in these areas and progress will be reported to Schools Forum regularly.

Special School – Addington

The new bandings are now in place and implemented in conjunction with key EHCP review points for individual pupils. The model will be subject to ongoing annual review as part of High Needs Block budget setting.

Special School – Northern House

Improvement work at Northern House has commenced, with Chiltern Way Academy providing direct leadership and management to the school as commissioned by the DfE. Chiltern Way Academy Trust are likely to become the Academy Trust for Northern House School as at 1st November 2020.

Independent & Non-Maintained Special Schools

Managing the number and cost of INMSS placements remains crucial to the development of a sustainable financial model for SEND and the High Needs Block. Targeted reductions in the 2020/21 financial year have not been delivered, both as a result of covid-19 impact on management action plans, and continual increase in demand.

The table below shows the number of INMSS placements across the last 4 years, and the relative % of all special school placements.

INMSS	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21*
Number of Placements	107	101	116	127
% of all Special School Placements	30%	27%	29%	32%

** 2020/21 is current data snapshot; other years are from annual SEN2 return*

In light of the reported increase in forecast spend in this area for the current year, an in-depth line by line review of all placements and their planning assumptions will recommence during October. This will inform an updated management action plan, and associated financial model.

Pupil Referral Unit

Work has not progressed on a new funding formula in respect of Foundry College. This will commence during the Autumn Term and a future paper on recommendations will be brought to Schools Forum in the Spring Term.

Tri-Partite Funding

Discussions are taking place between colleagues in Education, Social Care and Health about the shared funding of provision for individual children with particularly complex needs. A joint arrangement with neighbouring authorities is also being explored to determine a process which ensures there is appropriate funding for such placements. Progress will be reported to Forum at the next meeting.

05. High Needs Block Budget & Deficit Management Plan

The challenge of balancing increasing demand and available resources continues to be at the forefront of planning, however the latest HNB forecast update demonstrates the ongoing scale of that challenge.

Despite significantly increased resources for the 2020/21 financial year, demand and costs are outpacing available budget.

A robust multi-year model forms a vital element of the Council's Deficit Management Plan and it was expected to bring an update on that to the October Schools Forum meeting. Given the significant movements in forecast and the associated increasing activity levels, a fundamental review of assumptions is now taking place to reset the baseline and data used for modelling. More detail on this will be reported to future Forum meetings.

In recent weeks the ESFA has issued guidance and a template to use as a planning tool, to develop evidence-based and strategic plans covering SEND provision.

Use of the tool will be explored as part of the review of planning assumptions. Further information is available on the line below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-deficit-management-plan>

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