

**EDUCATION SEND GROUP
REPORT TO FORUM
FOR PRESENTATION
AT FORUM ON 8 December 2020**

Date of Virtual meeting: 12 November 2020 - Brief Summary of Items Discussed

- **Matters' Arising** – Schools' access to ASQ information remains outstanding, with difficulties around obtaining parental consent to sharing information. Implementation of the new Equipment Policy has been delayed by issues concerning who should insure the equipment - the LA which owns it, or schools to whom it is loaned out. Waiting times for assessments through the SAS service have been greatly exacerbated by Covid, due to restrictions in carrying out face to face assessments and leading to a 65-week wait for 430 children.
- **SEND Funding** - The net anticipated overspend has risen by £200k to £2.5m since September. However, the additional £2.5m HN funding for the current year and again in 2021-22 will move in-year budgets towards balancing, leaving the accumulated £8.6m deficit to deal with. Only small savings have been made from the closure of independent out-of-borough provisions during the first lockdown, as the Government instructed authorities to continue to pay fees to ensure sustainable provision for pupils to return to.
- **Out-of-Borough Payments to Independent and Private Providers** - Data provided showed a trend of reducing numbers of young people being placed out-of-borough (155 placements in May 2018/136 in November 2020), but a significant increase in placement cost (average placement cost of £31,246 in May 2018 to £44,483 in November 2020), together with a small number of extremely expensive placements. A key part of the Recovery Plan is the Commissioning Strategy, which aims to add in-borough capacity in the type of provision that we are sending a significant cohort of young people to externally. Provision of regular attendance and outcome data for these students will be conditions of contracts that will be put in place under future plans.
- **School Place Planning for HN** – Ann Pearson provided latest Solihull data for young people with SEND based on primary need across sectors and collaboratives, together with comparisons with regional and national data. Key findings show growth of 7.6% in the number of children with EHCPs in schools, significant growth in ASD and SEMH, growth in EY and primary and a similar pattern for children on 'school support', with 3.3% of children in schools and ARPs having EHCPs. Data shows Solihull's reliance on out-of-borough independent provision and a significantly higher incidence of ASD than both regionally and nationally. Areas identified as urgently needing additional in-borough places are EY, post-16 and SLD.
- **Alternative Provision Update** - Bev Petch provided a range of exclusions data, an update on EHE figures and Alternative Provision arrangements under Covid.
- **DGS Recovery Plan** – Full Cabinet approved the DSG Recovery Plan on 5 November. The Head Teacher Reference Group has been re-established to oversee the Plan on behalf of schools and members asked for clear communication with all stakeholders throughout the Recovery process. The current deficit is £8.6m and regular deputations are being made to the DfE for more funding for schools and High Needs, particularly as schools have lost considerable income and incurred additional costs due to Covid.
- **Assistant Director Updates** - Tim Browne agreed to follow up issues with therapists refusing to come into schools to provide face to face therapy, particularly for young people with SLD. The Reshaping Education paper has been published and all stakeholders were encouraged to respond to the questionnaire. Allocation of funds from the £55k budget to schools to support the Gypsy, Roma Traveller community was circulated following the meeting. A group has been set up to consolidate intelligence of all at-risk young people to ensure resources are appropriately targeted to support them. Charlotte Jones has been appointed Head of Service, starting on 25 November and the START Team Manager has been recruited, to start in February 2021.
- **START Team Update** – Compliance with the 20-week EHCP assessment process time rose to 93% in September, the biggest issue remains naming of provision. The aim is to reach and sustain 95% compliance. The team is currently receiving an extremely high number of applications to assess, putting enormous pressure on staff. It was agreed that schools would benefit from support in producing quality application forms in order to secure appropriate provision for their pupils; these included instruction videos, exemplar forms and following the graduated approach before applications were raised.
- **SISS Service 2019-20 Annual Report** - This was accepted with no questions raised.

Full minutes of the meeting can be requested from Ali McWilliam amcwilliam@solihull.gov.uk