

**EDUCATION SEND GROUP
REPORT TO FORUM
FOR CIRCULATION TO
FORUM MEMBERS IN
FEBRUARY 2021**

Date of Virtual meeting: 27 January 2021 - Brief Summary of Items Discussed

- **SEND Funding** (Steve Fenton) - Figures show a worsening situation compared to the November report. This is primarily due to unanticipated additional spend on Post-16, plus increases in Other Special Education (provision for young people without a school place), Independent School Fees and increased top-ups for in and out-of-borough provision.
- **Out-of-Borough Payments to Independent and Private Providers** (Steve Fenton) - Despite a fall in the average placement cost, there have been 16 further placements since November, resulting in an additional £250k of costs. The main pressure continues to be with the ARC suite of schools; these are the young people targeted for Solihull's ASD school, due to open in 2022 and the Mill Lodge ARP.
- **Head of SEND Updates** (Charlotte Jones) – CJ talked through the approach to be taken in line with the High Needs Recovery Plan. She demonstrated work as taking place in three tiers, starting with ensuring the service is legally compliant with the Code of Practice, that processes, including for ECHPs and Annual Reviews, are sufficiently robust and decisions are adequately challenged. The middle tier will focus on developing a 3-year Commissioning Strategy to ensure sufficiency of the right kind of places, that young people are placed in the most appropriate provision and that placements are properly monitored. The final tier will focus on developing the Strategies, working with stakeholders through the Joint Additional Needs Board and co-production with families and the Parent Carer Voice, creating an Inclusion Strategy that oversees a consistent and confident approach across the borough and an Early Years Strategy to embed early intervention and a graduated approach.
- **Reducing Violent Incidents T&F Group** (Melissa Jones) - As chair of the T&F Group, MJ provided a brief update on the group's initial meeting. The group will meet again on 8 February.
- **Alternative Provision Update** (Bev Petch) - BP provided latest figures for Elective Home Education, where 132 young people have joined the EHE Register since September 2020, many of whom have cited Covid-19 as the reason and where it is possible, when the pandemic has subsided, they may wish to return to a school place. The formal consultation on the future and possible closure of Summerfield ended in November. The consensus was for a different approach going forward and the AP Strategy will assess what this might look like and ensure there is provision for permanently excluded youngsters or those at risk of permanent exclusion. In the meantime, the report to Cabinet Member is on hold. BP provided comparison data for permanent and fixed term exclusions for December 2020 against the previous year. Further analysis is required to understand the reason for falling and rising numbers across various sectors.
- **Any Other Business** (Steph Freeman) - SFr shared a concern raised by a number of parents where some schools had been pressurising families about children's unacceptable level of on-line attendance and participation. It was acknowledged that this is a difficult time for schools and families and that putting additional pressure on families is unhelpful. LM recommended parents experiencing this should talk first to their school before escalating the issue.

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

LM/AMc/3.2.21