

**EDUCATION SEND GROUP
REPORT TO FORUM
FOR
4 October 2021
FORUM MEETING**

Date of Virtual meeting: 29 September 2021 - Brief Summary of Items Discussed

- **Part-time Timetables (Bev Petch)** – BP shared the formal protocol and associated guidance, which will ensure equity of use for all school sectors, give HTs confidence to use PTTT and ensure a beneficial process is in place for families. The process is for use in ‘exceptional circumstances’ and for a maximum of eight weeks. Members debated a number of areas which would benefit from further clarification, particularly around the differing responses available for children and young people with and without SEND. The protocol guidance will be launched in Autumn, with notification to the LA arrangements introduced at a later date.
- **Reducing Violent Incidents T&F Group (Mel Jones)** – The schools’ survey showed that many school staff were experiencing frequent physical and verbal incidents. Schools would welcome ways in which to manage and reduce these, through refresher training on managing challenging behaviours and strategies for de-escalation and a suitable course is being drawn up. Members discussed the possibilities and limitations around supporting the wider family and its links to Solihull as an ‘inclusive borough’.
- **Annual Review Paperwork T&F Group (Amanda Hana)** – Three T&F meetings have been scheduled to review the paperwork. In the meantime, AH clarified a number of queries around who chairs AR meetings (schools) and whether EHCP officers should attend in person for face to face Reviews (yes), but it is no longer necessary for an EHCP officer to be present, unless specifically invited.
- **Matters’ Arising** – Although face to face interactions with community therapists can now take place ‘where essential’, schools continue to report that ‘virtual first’ is the dominant response, which is particularly difficult for very young children or those with complex needs. The waiting time for the Statutory Assessment Service (SAS) has risen to 87 weeks, with the service at 50% of its clinical staff capacity. Recruitment is on-going and the service is in discussions with a private company in a bid to reduce waiting times.
- **Payments to Independent and Private Post-16 Colleges and Schools (Steve Fenton)** – Work through the SEND Improvement Plan should start to bring about a reduction in the number of new out-of-borough placements being made going forward and future schedules will emphasise new placements against a baseline of January 2020.
- **High Needs Monitoring (Steve Fenton)** – At Period 5, spend is largely on budget, although a year-end overspend of £2.65m is anticipated, together with an accumulated overspend of around £12m. It was stressed that, despite a vast amount of work going on, financially things are likely to worsen before they improve.
- **SENDIAS Update (Hazel Clarke)** – HC provided a verbal update, including the reduction in additional DfE funding from £45k three years ago, to an expectation of no additional funding next year. This, together with a tighter response time to initial enquiries, as stipulated in the new contract with the Local Authority and an increase in families requiring support, has seriously impacted the team and service delivery. As well as taking initial enquiries and working through cases, the service undertakes outreach work, with workshops for both parents and professionals and uses all mediums to engage with families.

- **Parent Carer Voice Update (Steph Freeman)** – SFr provided a verbal update which, like SENDIAS, demonstrated the growth in families needing support. In a voluntary capacity, PCV representatives are involved with strategic and family meetings, pilot schemes, engage with families in various ways, including social media, arrange training courses, coffee and chat meetings and much more. Membership has doubled since April, with over 400 families now signed up.
- **Alternative Provision Strategy (Michele Sadler)** - MS presented an updated pre-consultation discussion paper. In particular, members discussed future plans for Summerfield, the potential need for part-time vocational courses for secondary AP pupils, concerns around schools offering on-line learning as an alternative tuition offer currently provided through Triple Crown and ESCOS and the potential need for primary AP and what this should look like. A formal Consultation is due out later in Autumn term.
- **Additional Needs Strategy (Charlotte Jones)** – CJ explained what the Strategy aims to do, what it comprises and how it will sit alongside the wider SEND Improvement plan to bring about operational improvements for schools, families and children. The final draft Strategy will be presented to the Management Board on 21 October, followed by a short consultation before the final Strategy is presented to Cabinet on 8 December.
- **Accessibility Strategy (Deborah Carpenter)** - The ‘almost final’ draft was discussed. It was felt to be comprehensive and well-crafted, showing clear connections with the Commissioning Strategy and Graduated Approach. Questions were raised about support for children to access holiday clubs, particularly if the HAF project does not continue.
- **EHCP Panels (Amanda Hana)** – AH proposed moving EHCP Panels away from Mondays to alternative days in order to avoid disruption from bank holidays.

LM/AMc
7.10.21

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