

**Minutes of the Education SEND Group Meeting held
9.30am Thursday 31 March 2022 Virtual MS Teams**

Present:	Louise Minter (Chair) Emily Hume Jacque Nicholls Nicole Fowles Nick Halligan Lisa Whitehouse Lynda Mackay Kerry Thompson-Moore Amanda Mordey Charlotte Shadbolt Antoinette Fisher Hazel Clarke Steph Freeman Andrew Wilkins Charlotte Jones Amanda Hana Deborah Carpenter Ann Pearson Paula Thompson Lisa Morris	Streetsbrook Infant & EY Academy Damson Wood Primary Dickens Heath Primary Coleshill Heath Park Hall Tender Years Nursery Knowle CofE Primary Academy Alderbrook Academy Merstone/Forest Oak Heart of England Academy Dorrige Primary SENDIAS Parent Carer Voice Hazel Oak SMBC SMBC SMBC SMBC SMBC SMBC SMBC
Minutes:	Jane Watts	Schools Forum Secretary

Item		Action
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from Tim Browne, Steve Fenton, Rosie Herbert, Claire Howell, David Lewis, Trevor Scott, Andy Simms and Charlotte Vale.</p>	
2	<p>Review Previous Minutes (07.02.22) and Outstanding Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>SAS Waiting Times (CH) SFr reported that waiting times were now 91 weeks. Helios had now been called in; they can only accept over sevens. AWi stated that AM (not present at this point) had expressed concern about money for SEND schools which had not been received at her school. AF thought the issue could be to do with places and had now been resolved but would check with AM.</p> <p>Reducing Violent Incidents (CJ) MJ had developed a training programme and CJ confirmed that a bid had been put in for money from the central council pot and the result should be known by the end of April. Other potential sources for funding are available if necessary.</p> <p>High Needs Funding Transport (SF) In the absence of SF, this item was carried forward to the next meeting.</p> <p>Impact of COVID T&F (CJ) CJ/JW to liaise with David Butt about establishing this task and finish group. A bid had been submitted for funding.</p> <p>Additional Needs Strategy (CJ) CJ had produced a letter and poster for schools which will be published alongside the new Additional Needs Strategy. This will be ready for in the summer term and hard copies will be sent in the post to schools, as well as via Headlines.</p> <p>SENDIAS (HC/CJ) CJ had received the notice from HC and will get it out via Headlines.</p> <p>Assessment Paperwork (AH) The task and finish group had not been set up yet, but the green paper might affect the way forward anyway. CJ explained that the consultation for the green paper will take place throughout the summer; followed by responses and the white paper. This could all take a couple of years so whatever comes out of the white paper will not have any</p> 	<p>SF</p> <p>CJ/JW</p> <p>CJ</p>

	<p>effect immediately.</p> <p>It was agreed that due to the long time frame there needs to be a focus on priorities and funding. It was agreed that AH/CJ would work out the priorities and get back to LM with a view to setting up a task and finish group.</p> <p>It was noted that Early Years was missing from the consultation document. AH reminded everyone that the green paper is a consultation document so if Early Years professionals are clear that things are missing it is important to let the government know. LM also suggested that this is added to collaborative agendas for potential collaborative responses.</p>	
3	<p>High Needs Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule of Payments to Post-16 Colleges and Independent and Private Schools In the absence of SF, to be added to the Forum Finance agenda. 	DL
4	<p>Head of 0-25 SEND Service Update:</p> <p>SEND Improvement Update A report on the SEND Improvement Journey had been shared with the group. CJ added the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHCP team are being held to account. • A Principal EP has been appointed, joining in June. • Now seeing the impact on schools of more timely decisions etc. • They are aware that the lack of specialist places is an issue and it is about raising issues and identifying where the system needs to respond differently. • Council Services are making the improvements within their control but now need the support of schools changing practices to embed further developments. <p>CJ responded to comments/queries as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NH: MS had stated that the Inclusion Team was going to focus on policies and processes around the graduated response in terms 2/3; where are we with that? There is confusion on the ground as to what SENCOs can and cannot do. Also, NH was concerned about the 33% of schools that are not being inclusive. As part of consultation more secondary SENCOs are in place. Do they understand what the consultation is about? Also where do schools site concerns other than that paper? • <i>CJ responded that the challenge for MS has been recruitment, but they will be fully staffed after Easter.</i> <i>In terms of policy and practice, they are not there yet. The graduated approach work is being progressed with schools so the Inclusion Team will be supporting that.</i> <i>Agree that it needs to be easier for schools to know when to contact the Inclusion Team. CJ's advice was, where a school feels they have done everything to support the child/family, that the Inclusion Team is their first point of call.</i> <i>In terms of the 33%, there is an issue if only a third of schools are accepting children with EHCPs. Once the panel have determined a child is appropriate for mainstream schools, the SEND Code of Practice and legislation gives little ability to say no apart from high legal thresholds. When a school says no to a consult we need to be talking to schools about reasonable adjustments and following up any concerns – but at the moment this is placing unhelpful tension between the Council and some schools.</i> • AM referred to sections 3.2 and 3.3 on the report (EHCPs and reviews). The work load around that has significantly increased due to the backlog of amending previous plans. This is a challenge for schools especially for target setting. 	

Also, will the new annual review paperwork be reviewed to see how it has worked after one round?

Thirdly, the template for new EHCPs is causing anxiety to parents because a lot of information has been taken out. There are concerns it does not describe the child effectively and around communication with schools and parents in terms of when it will be new format.

- *CJ responded that with annual reviews, the new ones are being carried out on time but there is a historic backlog of 1,000. The backlog team is in place but due to other vacancies in the team, staff have been moved around so there has not been as much impact as they would like. They are aware there are many children with the outdated plans that have not been properly reviewed for a number of years and this needs to be resolved. The wider challenge is that the LA legally has to do annual reviews.*

AH added that the backlog team prioritise cases so if they pick up a plan that has not been amended they check the date of the next review and will contact the school and parents to ask if they can merge them. Ideally all schools would do reviews within 12 months but not all do. This is another task to phone and check. EHCP Officers do speak to parents to advise of the changes being made, and why, but accept this may not be in every case, and there is still a lack of trust from some parents that things are being done for the best reasons. CJ had not planned on doing annual review paperwork but this can be added to list of task and finish groups. LM agreed.
- *SFr stated that a big issue is 15 day consultations over-running. The PCV would like to suggest that if the LA goes to a school to consult and they have not received a response in the 15 days that they take this to mean the school does not have an issue and can be named. This would be in line with other LAs.*
- *CJ explained that after 15 days the council chases up the school for a response. There have been tricky conversations with schools which could potentially end in legal challenge, but it would be interesting to know schools' views on this suggestion.*

LM stated that a timely response from schools can depend on when the consultation comes in and she felt that schools should be consulted about the difficult timescales.

AH: The summer holidays can be an exemption period but Easter, Christmas and half term holidays legally cannot. She suggested Heads submitted a comment around this process when responding to the consultation on the green paper.

HC stated that it is important for schools to remember that the consultation is between the school and the LA, not the parents. When the LA names the school that cannot meet need they go to tribunal and information in the paperwork is available for everyone to see. It is important that schools are mindful of this when deciding what to write on that document. LM suggested this could be a piece of work to ensure all schools are aware of the consultation paperwork.
- *LW had a challenging experience with trying to refer a three-year-old with being asked to duplicate information in numerous referral forms. She asked if the processes can be reviewed and LM agreed that the duplication of information needs to be added to the list for the task and finish group.*
- *AH responded that in terms of EHCP if evidence has already been submitted you can include that rather than do it again.*

PT added that the Early Years team is not part of SISS and there does need to be agreement for referral to services. SISS only needs the referral form, no additional paperwork.

	<p><i>CJ felt that this needs to form part of the Inclusion Board's oversight. To ensure pathways are clear and fits in to the graduated work.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of the national picture Solihull has a much lower percentage of children with an EHCP in mainstream schools. LM felt that the percentage may be masking numbers of children and would be interesting to analyse the data.</i></p>	
5	<p>Early Years Provision</p> <p>AP reported that there was a lot of work going on around Early Years provision planning, linked to the SEND Commissioning Strategy and Early Years and Childcare sufficiency assessment. Parent/carer survey was underway at the moment and the outcome of the survey would support future Early Years provision planning.</p> <p>The last task and finish meeting took place in November. AP was tasked with moving this forward in the Summer Term.</p>	
6	<p>Inclusion Strategy</p> <p>Solihull's draft Strategy for Inclusive Education 2022-2025 had been shared with the group. It had been sent to PCV, schools and various social media sites, and will go in Headlines the following week for consultation (open until 29 April 2022). There had been a pilot consultation at PCV and Dickens Heath. Feedback will be used to finalise the strategy and they are moving forward some actions with SSSAB.</p> <p>Two events will run the following week for parents to go through the strategy and consultation. Exeter University have started to collate the baseline data and want to do 15 minute interviews with some secondary SENCos.</p> <p>PT responded to questions/comments as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NF felt that the impact measures listed in the action plan read more like actions than impact measures. AM agreed. <p><i>PT asked that this be included in feedback to the consultation. LM encouraged everyone to respond to the consultation and to encourage collaboratives.</i></p>	
7	<p>SENDIAS Update</p> <p>HC shared the following information - since September 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial Enquires: 705. 97% responded within 2 days or less and 100% within 3 days. 9 closed as no availability to attend meetings Casework: 203 cases. 3 closed as no availability to attend meetings and 6 closed because they went to independent SEND support services. Attended 113 meetings Current waiting list is 27. Outreach: 14 events attended. <p>HC reported that they now have a full team of staff members. However, the funding that enabled them to have two part-time members of staff ceased that day and the only way she was able to extend their contracts was to use some underspend. Going forward, they will be two members of staff down which will impact on how work is done.</p> <p>LM asked what was being done about funding and CJ responded that SENDIAS is a commissioned service and she would pick this up through formal processes.</p>	CJ
8	<p>Parent Carer Voice Update</p> <p>SFr reported that PCV was accessing more families. They held a successful SEND community event bringing families and professionals together, looking at working together. Feedback was very positive with 4.2 out of 5 now more confident that changes are going to happen.</p> <p>LM suggested that a future focus might include positives and acknowledgement that for some families it does work. SFr responded that this was one of a series of events and the next one will look at what has been done since that first meeting which focused on difficult conversations.</p> <p>Solihull PCV are setting up a round table event for various groups including voluntary, the third sector, Healthwatch to try and join the dots.</p>	

	<p>There had been a successful careers event which was well attended. They will be looking to make the next one bigger and more informative.</p> <p>NF had been asked by colleagues in north Solihull to say supporting children with very complex, challenging behaviours is an issue that needs dealing with properly by looking at provision. The High Needs Team are at capacity so not able support; Refresh is a north provision and does not support in terms of high level need, so what is going to happen?</p> <p>LM responded that this needs to go to the Covid Impact task and finish group.</p>	
9	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>HAF Project (DC)</p> <p>The HAF project has 3-year funding to provide care for children over the school holidays particularly those eligible for free school meals, vulnerable children and children with additional needs. The focus is on nutrition and activity, and they are pushing the inclusion agenda</p> <p>DC is heading a work stream group for SEND and is trying to put in place training for providers to ensure they accept as many children as they can and that all SEND children can access provision. They would like a school representative to join the group. SFr suggested including a representative from a special school as well.</p> <p>JW was asked to email collaborative leads asking for volunteers (this was sent on 4 April 2022). LM offered to join the group in the event no-one puts themselves forward.</p>	JW
10	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>9.30am Monday 4 July 2022 (venue tbc)</p>	