

Minutes - Sheffield Education Funding Forum

3.00-5.00pm, 24 September 2024 at Learn Sheffield

Chair: Keith Crawshaw

Schools Forum Members:

Primary Heads Representatives

- Nigel Brooke-Smith (Greystones)
- Helen Kenyon (Pipworth)
- Chris Holder (Lowfield)

Primary Governors

- Alison Warner (Grenoside)

Secondary Head

- Linda Gooden (King Edward VII)

Non-school Members

- Stephen Betts, Learn Sheffield
- Andy Krabbendam, Faith Sector (Clifford All Saints)
- Fiona Hawksley/Lisa Smith, Trade Unions
- Karen Simpkin, Early Years providers (Sunflower Children's Centre)
- James Smythe, 16-19 Sector (Sheffield College)

Academies

- Keith Crawshaw (Sheffield South East Trust)
- Jim Dugmore (Peak Edge Academy Trust)
- Stacy McKay (Springs Academy)
- Neil Miley (Mercia Learning Trust)
- Morag Somerville (Steel City Schools Partnership)
- Nevine Towers (Diocese of Sheffield Academy Trust)

Special Academies

- Joel Hardwick (Nexus Multi-academy Trust)

Special Schools

- Aileen Hosty/Laura Rzepinski (Bents Green)
- 1 x vacant seat

PRU

- Alan Richards (Sheffield Inclusion Centre)

Apologies: Cllr Dale, Linda Gooden, Aileen Hosty/Laura Rzepinski, Andy Krabbendam, Stacy McKay, Alan Richards (Rhona Dodds attended on behalf of), Lisa Smith, James Smythe, Nevine Towers

Also in attendance: Patrick Butterell, Interim Director of EY, Education and Skills; Rhona Dodds, Sheffield Inclusion Centre; Amanda Murray, EY, Education and Skills (notes); Mark Sheikh, Head of Service, Resourcing and Business Planning

Presenters: Meredith Dixon-Teasdale, Strategic Director of Children's Services; Matt Peers, Head of Commissioning – Education and Childcare, Integrated Commissioning Service

Observers: Rob Campbell and Jennie Meadows, Performance and Analysis Service; Mark Finnigan; Denise Stone

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

Apologies were noted as per above and no declarations of interest were made.

The Chair welcomed new members: Neil Miley and Nevine Towers, both representing academies. Also noted that Karen Simpkin has been re-elected by the early years sector for a second term.

2. Previous meeting minutes/matters arising

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record. The following matters arising were raised:

Reserves

It was requested that the academy reserves position be clarified at the December meeting of the Forum.

PFI Expiry

With regard to the PFI action to be addressed via the Funding Group, the Chair and Mark Sheikh clarified that this was superseded by meetings that have been held with the six PFI schools. These schools are now better informed and regular monthly meetings have been scheduled along with two-weekly updates.

3. Update from Strategic Director of Children's Services

Meredith Dixon-Teasdale shared an update on priorities:

- Sheffield is one of the youngest cities in the country.
- In the national context, the focus has not recently been on young people and we are now seeing the impact of this, for example on children and young people with special educational needs (SEND).
- The [Sheffield City Goals](#) set the direction of travel.
- The [Sheffield City Council Plan](#) has three themes – People, Prosperity and Planet and five outcomes, the first of which being that Sheffield will be 'A place where all children belong and all young people can build a successful future'. The belonging framework includes schools, home, family and community.
- On 1 October, Family Hubs and Youth Services will be moving into our service area.
- Sheffield was rated Good/Outstanding in the September 2023 social care inspection.
- We need our own children's homes to ensure our children are getting the best outcomes that are also cost-effective - we currently have expensive placements and our overspend in that area is £5m.
- Our relationship with Learn Sheffield has flourished and we have a good partnership approach which is helping to solve issues in the SEND system for example.
- Work around alternative provision needs a clear strategy and a range of providers.
- SEND:
 - Funding is not consistent in how we meet needs, and how we ensure the money is following the child (initially to review via the mainstream lens).
 - We need to tackle the cost of the system whilst ensuring good/improved outcomes for all children.

- We need to ensure good decision-making and reduce tribunals.
- Our Home to School transport is over-reliant on taxis with a £6.5m overspend.
- There needs to be challenge within the system.

Forum discussion raised the following points:

- Alison expressed concerns around the growth in numbers of home educated children, in particular from a safeguarding perspective. Some are being kept at home whilst awaiting the outcome of appeals.
- Meredith added:
 - There is overlap with children missing from education.
 - There is a cohort of parents of approximately 1,000 children who choose to keep their children at home for philosophical reasons.
 - Whilst others keep their children at home due to their perception of SEND needs not being met in school.
 - There is an overlap with safeguarding and there isn't a statutory expectation to maintain a register.
- Covid has been harmful in terms of behaviours and expectations and the SEND Code of Conduct has also raised expectations – we need to ensure that needs are met but also manage parent expectations.
- Curriculum enrichment in Sheffield has a huge impact: Children's University, The Music Hub and Outdoor Education are all innovative and forward-thinking examples.
- There needs to be more focus on prevention in early years to help avoid issues with emotional, behavioural and speech in later years.
- Karen Simpkin added that she feels that early years is often an after-thought and long waiting lists leave providers struggling to provide additional support in the meantime.
- We need to consider how we link early years provision e.g. Best Start with sufficiency. We are working with providers to understand what is required.
- There is strong forecasting around sufficiency and there are plans to produce a 0-5 sufficiency document by next year, including SEND provision, and we are in discussions with the college regarding post-16 sufficiency.
- We are also in discussions with health in terms of access to provision. Meredith and Stephen Betts are meeting regularly to discuss the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) waiting lists and considering how we can meet needs regardless of assessment - we would prefer to spend on prevention rather than clinicians.

Action: Meredith to meet with Karen Simpkin to discuss the points raised above regarding early years.

4. SEND Top-up and Locality Funding

Mark Sheikh presented an update, all as per Paper 3, and highlighted the following points:

- Last year the locality funding for this work was £6m and it has now been increased to £7m.

- There has been inconsistency across localities and the resource allocation system (RAS) was commissioned to create a needs-based profile banding system which in turn will establish the funding required - we may require a further £7m in funding.
- The initial modelling of funding values has been completed.
- Approximately 700 pupil needs profiles have been completed for mainstream and it is expected that all mainstream profiles will be complete by Easter.
- New Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans are being input using the RAS.
- Due to the change of administration in Government, the indicative funding allocation has been delayed and the Education and Skills Funding Agency is closing, which may cause further delays/issues.

Forum discussion can be summarised as follows:

- Joel Hardwick suggested that by starting this work with mainstream, prior to involving special schools, may mean that we find the system doesn't work for special and we should therefore ensure they are involved earlier in the process. Also, that there needs to be some overlapping of bands.
- Mark confirmed that there is scope to build on what we do in mainstream and that the aim is to fund in mainstream to prevent escalations. Meredith added that the need to move away from the highest specialist arena may cause a period of risk.
- It was clarified that bands are being decided based on level of need using benchmarking, but we will then also need to consider affordability.
- It was agreed that the current quality of EHC plans is not ideal, the funding is not clear and we need to reduce tribunals.
- It was suggested that by attaching values to bands/plans this may lead to parents trying to make their children fit certain bands.

Action: To bring this item back to the December Forum in a strategic context.

The Forum **noted** the update.

5. Exclusion Prevention Update

Matt Peers presented the update:

- Paper 4 provides a high-level update and there is a lot of work being undertaken in this area, some of which is developmental.
- We do not yet have the full set of monitoring data, and we will revisit this throughout the year and provide further updates.
- So far, the work has been positive and we are working to improve and diversify the offer.
- 94% of those children and young people accessing the exclusion service have SEND needs.
- There is a 79% attendance rate.

Patrick Butterell added some context:

- There have been 195 permanent exclusions in the last year.
- The PRU is rated Good, but we need more than one centre.

- We decided to diversify and expand the framework by commissioning Brigantia Learning Trust to provide provision from summer 2024.

Forum discussion is noted as follows:

- Morag Somerville suggested that schools could help with the solution and that some already have their own provision without the funding.
- The funding for the provision should follow the pupil elsewhere in the system.
- Issues relating to excluded pupils impact on staff recruitment and retention in schools.
- The solution for primary pupils should be found within their locality.
- Stephen Betts added that Learn Sheffield:
 - Has been commissioned to support hub provision – integrated resources and other types – over 100.
 - Is developing policy standards that will be published later in the half-term.
 - Is putting together a team to review standards – half the reviews will be completed by Christmas.
 - Will be sending a questionnaire to all schools to capture what is in the system and then to offer support.

The Forum **noted** the update and the challenges faced by the city, and our prevention-led response to address this.

6. Sufficiency Planning

Further to the paper presented to the June Forum, Matt Peers gave an update, as outlined in Paper 5:

- There continues to be a citywide position of excess/surplus primary school places in Sheffield, as a result of lower birth rates, and this is forecast to remain for the next five to seven years. To consider how we exploit the surplus space.
- For secondary, there is a deficit of 15 forms of entry in Y7 places citywide which equates to 450 places, and we are considering options as to how we manage this.
- Post-16 numbers are forecast to increase each year, reaching a peak in 2028/29. There is concern around those young people not in education, employment or training and we are liaising with the sector to better understand the sufficiency position.
- There is continued growing demand for SEND places. The opening of the two new schools to create an additional 180 places will not meet demand alone.
- We have commissioned 1st Planner to undertake a review of the mainstream secondary and special school estates to look for opportunities to create more sufficiency.

Forum discussion included the following:

- It was confirmed that there will be two peaks in secondary and post-16.
- Early years involvement will be discussed in more detail when Meredith and Karen meet. Consideration needs to be given to how we respond better to early years SEND demand.

- Health sufficiency will be considered internally by December and be brought to the Forum in spring.
- Local and growth plans already link into sufficiency work.
- The work with 1st Planner will expand to see how the relationship between primary and secondary fits together, and to consider middle schools.
- There is no expectation of any additional capital funding in the near future.

The Forum noted the update and supports continued engagement and involvement in addressing sufficiency issues; including helping identify opportunities to increase sufficiency in secondary and to work collaboratively with the post-16 sector.

7. Early Years Extended Entitlements

Matt Peers summarised this update:

- A Wraparound Delivery Plan was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in June.
- The new Government has not committed to the 2025/26 provisional funding element.
- 27 providers have been approved.
- A total of £767k of capital grants has been allocated to 17 projects across the city to date, leaving £82k available.
- Next steps include:
 - Development of plans for more provisions/expansions to open in January or April 2025, targeting areas without wraparound care.
 - Family Hub Coordinators will work with schools and other childcare providers to understand local demand and develop plans.
 - Funding providers will be supported by the Sheffield Wraparound Support Hub and they will develop a Quality and Inclusion Charter. This is a 12-month contract provided by a national provider (Out of School Alliance) and a local provider (Manor After School Kids Klub). There is a launch event on 25 September and information from this event will be available to share with the Forum.

The Forum noted the update, allocation of funding and next steps.

8. AOB

Karen raised the issue of staffing in the early years sector – the recruitment and retention situation is becoming critical and is mostly due to low rates of pay.

It was agreed that:

- We should write to MPs via Cllr Dale to draw attention to the issue.
- Further discussion is required around breakfast clubs at a future meeting.

Action: Mark to draft a letter to Secretary of State for Education/MPs on behalf of Cllr Dale.

Date of next meeting: 18 December 2024, 3.00-5.00pm, Learn Sheffield