

To all members of the Sunderland Schools Forum

Together for Children  
Sunderland  
City Hall – Level 2  
Plater Way  
Sunderland  
SR1 3AA

Date: 8th February 2024  
Our TFC-SF/ZW

Dear Colleague

## SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Schools Forum, scheduled for Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 8.30 am. The meeting will be held virtually, and a Teams appointment has been circulated.

### AGENDA

24/09	<b>Welcome, Introductions and Apologies</b>  Mrs A Blakey and Cllr I Scott	
24/10	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
24/11	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>  School Forum held on 11 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 (attached)	
24/12	<b>Matters Arising from the Minutes/Agreed Actions (Action Log attached)</b>	
24/13	<b>Feedback from Short Life Working Groups</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion</li> </ul>	KR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality Assurance Processes for Service Providers</li> <li>DBV Funding: Probity – invitation for expressions of interest to join the Subgroup</li> </ul>	SM SM
24/14	<b>Presentations:</b>  No presentations to be presented at this meeting	
24/15	<b>Reports for Discussion and Decision</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commissioning High Needs Places for 2024/25 In Specialist and Alternative Provisions (deferred from previous meeting)</li> </ul>	AR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget Planning Framework 2024/25 (attached)</li> </ul>	SGR/JH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth and Falling Rolls Report (deferred from previous meeting)</li> </ul>	AR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication Hub &amp; Language Provisions</li> </ul>	PR

<b>24/16</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
<b>24/17</b>	<b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b>  Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 8.30 am – virtual meeting Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 8.30 am – virtual meeting	

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully

*Zena Wilkinson*

Zena Wilkinson  
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 Governor Support Team  
 Together for Children  
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## SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 8.30 am

### School Forum Member Attendance Voting

Paula Hegarty - Chair	Maintained Pupil Referral Service Headteacher (Mandatory)
James Waller – Vice Chair	Maintained Special School Teacher
David Airey	Church of England Diocese
Michelle Barr	Private, Voluntary & Independent Nurseries
Audrey Bolam	Academy Primary, Infants and Juniors
Catherine Jones	Maintained Primary School Headteacher
Paula Hegarty	Academy Secondary and All Through
Ailsa Higgins	Maintained Nursery Headteacher
Andy Lewis	Teachers Association
Andrew Carr	Academy Secondary and All Through
Colin Devlin	Academy Secondary and All Through
Michael Hartnack	Maintained Primary – Governor
Nicola Hill	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior (proxy for E M)
Dean Juric	Academy Secondary and All Through
Andy Lewis	Teacher Associations
John Lines	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior
Mick Little	Academy Special (Mandatory)
David Martyn	Private, Voluntary & Independent Nurseries
Phil Smith	Academy Secondary and All Through
Ruth Whiteside	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior
Mrs Donna Walker	Maintained Pupil Referral Service Headteacher (Mandatory)

### Non-Voting

Sara Bainbridge	Maintained Primary School
Cllr Linda Williams	Lead Member Children's Services
Lisa Woods	Maintained Primary School

### Together for Children Officers and Councillors

Debra Dixon	TfC Team Manager, Management Accounting Team
John Hope	TfC Technical Accountant Education Funding
Emma Leech	TfC Finance Business Partner
Simon Marshall	TfC Director of Education
Leigh Morris	TfC Team Manager, School Finance
Emma Nolan	TfC Finance Business Partner
Doborah Orr	TfC Head of Accounting and Finance
Steve G Renwick	TfC Direct of Finance
Kimberley Richardson	TfC Strategic Service Lead - Education
Pamela Robertson	TfC Strategic SEND Lead
Jill Wilson	TfC Finance Business Partner
Zena Wilkinson	Schools Forum Clerk

### School Forum Non-Member Attendance

Claire Smith

		Agreed Action
24/01	<p><b><u>Welcome, Introductions and Apologies</u></b></p> <p>The Clerk advised that apologies for absence had been submitted by Mrs Blakey, Mrs Hope, Mrs Maw and Mrs Monaghan (who had nominated a proxy - Miss Hill)</p> <p>The Clerk confirmed a quorum was present and the meeting could proceed to business.</p> <p>Members were advised that the following individuals had been nominated to join the School Forum membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michelle Barr (Private, Voluntary and Ind Nurseries)</li> </ul> <p>Mrs Barr would replace Mr Norman Vincent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mrs Ailsa Higgins (Maintained Nursery)</li> </ul> <p>Mrs Higgins would replace Mrs Julie Heron.</p> <p>Members welcomed Mrs Barr and Mrs Higgins to the School Forum membership.</p>	
24/02	<p><b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b></p> <p>Members <b>NOTED</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A declaration of interest from Cllr Williams in relation to the appointment of Michelle Barr (as a family member was employed within Mrs Barr's nursery provision).</li> <li>- A declaration of interest from Mrs Barr (as a relative of a member of the School Forum was employed within her establishment).</li> <li>- Declarations could be made throughout the meeting, if appropriate.</li> </ul>	
24/03	<p><b><u>Minutes of Previous Meeting</u></b></p> <p>Members <b>RESOLVED</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To accept the minutes of the Schools Forum held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 as a true record.</li> </ul>	
24/04	<p><b><u>Matters Arising from the Meeting/Action Log</u></b></p> <p>Copies of the Action Log were circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>23/70 Health &amp; Safety Update Members received confirmation that arrangements had been implemented to enable Ms Scott to attend the Headteacher Cluster meetings.</p> <p>23/72 Matters Arising from the Minutes Members confirmed they could contact KR should they wish to schedule a meeting to Consilium Evolve.</p>	

	<p>23/73 Feedback from Short Life Working Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality Assurance Process for Service Providers</li> </ul> <p>Action outstanding to implement a School Forum Subgroup to verify probity within the DBV funding reports.</p> <p>23/74 Reports for Discussion and Decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget Planning Framework 2024/2025</li> </ul> <p>Action completed and copies of the DfE National Funding Forum for Schools and High Needs was circulated to members.</p> <p>Members noted that the action for JHo, to detail minimum level funding regulations, would be detailed in future reports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2024/2025</li> </ul> <p>PR was in attendance to provide further detail on Delivering Best Value.</p>	Members
24/05	<p><b><u>Feedback from Short Life Working Groups</u></b></p> <p><u>Inclusion</u></p> <p>KR confirmed there was no update as the next meeting was not scheduled until later in January 2024.</p> <p><u>Quality Assurance Process for Service Providers</u></p> <p>SM advised members that PR would detail the quality assurance procedures to be implemented within her DBV presentations.</p> <p>SM advised that TfC had implemented a recruitment process for Quality Assurance Team staff members, stating that he believed quality assurance needed to be considered as a long term focus requirement. SM explained that the Team growth requirement was in relation to additional requests for training, for example training on the completion of care plans, and if the recruitment process was successful this training would be facilitated.</p>	
24/06	<p><b><u>Presentations:</u></b></p> <p><b>Delivering Better Value</b></p> <p>PR presented the following presentation:</p> <p><b>Delivering Better Value (DBV) (January 2024)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DBV Journey in Summary.</li> </ul> <p>PR explained that all of the diagnostic and evidence gathering had been completed; plans and proposals had been developed and a bid had been submitted. PR explained that TfC had received the first quality assurance feedback, and the bid was progressing to the next stage.</p>	

- DBV Findings

PR explained that the bar graphs detailed the reason the Higher Needs Block (HNB) deficit was occurring, explaining that this was based on the increasing number of Education Health Care (EHC) plans. PR stated that the average costs attached to EHC plan was not increasing, just the actual number of EHC plans being implemented.

PR presented information detailing the largest cohorts, by both the number of children supported in provisions and HNB expenditure. PR explained that the focus going forward would be placed on changes which would have the greatest impact.

- Percentage of Children and Young Persons (CYPs) with an EHC Plan in a Maintained Specialist Setting

PR advised members that the percentage of Sunderland children placed within specialist settings was fairly high, explaining that Sunderland was well above national averages.

- Key Areas of Need

PR explained that 2 key areas of need had been identified:

- The number of new EHC plans issued peaked sharply at age range 5 – 6 years and again at 11 – 12 years, which linked to transition points in children’s educational journey.
- The main primary needs were Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) followed by Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Speech Language and Communication (SLC) needs.

PR explained that these three groups accounted for 85% of new plans in 2022/2023, with Severe Leading Disabilities (SLD), Mild Learning Disabilities (MLD) and Physical Disabilities (PD) accounting for the remain 15%.

- Percentage of CYPs in an Independent or Non-Maintained Specialist Setting – Regional Comparison

PR advised that there was a sharp spike of placements (for children between the ages of 12 and 15 years) into independent non maintained specialist placements. PR explained that this was often linked to an escalation of presenting needs in early adolescents, which often led to placement breakdowns, and could be a consequence of ineffective transition into secondary settings.

- Percentage of CYPs, within an EHC Plan, in Mainstream Settings (regional comparison)

PR reported that number of mainstream placements (of pupils with EHC plans) within Sunderland was low, when compared against other LAs, and stated that if the proposal was to shift the current budget deficit position this situation needed to be addressed.

- Case Review Outcomes

PR explained that case review workshops were held on 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023, with participants attending from a range of disciplines. PR advised that 32 case reviews were undertaken (covering a range of ages and provision types), to understand whether Sunderland delivered an ideal outcome to CYP with SEND. PR reported that in 53% of cases Sunderland had achieved the ideal outcome and the common themes for the remaining 47% were related to the type of provision or the timing of support offered.

PR explained that the review had identified that one in five CYPs could have had their needs met without an EHC plan and 50% would have benefited from better defined goals.

PR stated that the key themes which contributed to achieving a non-ideal outcome included:

- Quality/quantity of information available to the assessor.
- Gap in service offering.
- Parental preference.
- Lack of parental confidence in mainstream settings.
- Missed opportunity to utilise existing services.
- Wrong categorisation of primary need.
- Lack of capacity.
- Lack of engagement with Social Services.
- Services/support not effective.
- Access to knowledge training.

- Outcomes and Intended Impact

PR advised that DBV outputs took into account existing mitigations to minimise HNB deficits, including proactive plans around the expansion of Alternative Resource Provisions (ARP) and Alternative Provisions (AP). PR explained that the proposals submitted in the final bid built was based on these existing mitigations and sought to develop further opportunities for deficit reductions (monitored through TfC's Deficit Management Plan).

PR stated that the DBV funding would not eliminate the HNB deficit. PR explained that by modelling potential mitigations over time the potential current, optimistic and realistic, spending scenario was a between £58m and £63 million in 2028. Members were advised that this would equate to an annual overspend of between £10m and £15m and would mean the HNB cumulative deficit would be between £70m and £75m by 2028 and this was taking into consideration existing and planned mitigations.

PR explained that there were key themes identified during the diagnostic work:

- Theme 1: Improving the quality of advice and EHC plans:
  - High quality and timely statutory advice.
  - Compliance for statutory duties.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Capturing CYPs views more effectively.</li> <li>○ How would this be achieved consistently across all ages and all partners?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Theme 2: Effective and consistent graduated response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More effective use of multi-disciplinary planning.</li> <li>○ Accurate application of the Code of Practice.</li> <li>○ Effective take-up of all services within the universal local offer.</li> <li>○ How can we ensure a more joined up approach to support CYP at SEN support?</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Theme 3: Developing inclusive practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adapted curriculum offer to meet a diverse range of needs in local schools.</li> <li>○ Consistent high quality information and offers available to all families.</li> <li>○ Identifying and resolving gaps in service offers.</li> <li>○ How can we ensure all families were confident they will receive high quality support for SEND?</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Theme 4: Strong transition offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development of an enhanced transition offer for vulnerable CYP with SEND.</li> <li>○ Ensuring transition was multi-disciplinary and joined up.</li> <li>○ Building knowledge and confidence in the next phase of education for both CYP, families and current settings.</li> <li>○ Understanding what support was needed for preparation for adulthood and the most appropriate pathways for young people post education or training.</li> <li>○ What does a good quality transition look like for a child or young person with SEND?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Our Proposals</li> </ul> <p>PR explained that the proposals going forward included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supporting a pilot programme, led by an outstanding local special school, to develop an adapted curriculum offer for schools.</li> </ul> <p>PR explained that this would support inclusion for children not yet able to access the full national curriculum in the same ways as peers, through an adapted, semi-formal curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Purchase of the “Education for Learning Assessment Tool” and support training to embed wider use across the local area.</li> <li>- Establish an inclusion fund schools could use to bid for specific child related funding (not staffing), to remove or mitigate barriers to inclusion within mainstream.</li> </ul> <p>PR stated that the proposals going forward was:</p>	
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- The creation of a Quality Assurance Team which could deliver focused training and support to schools and other professional advice givers.

PR provided an overview of the proposed Team composition.

- The secondment of Headteachers/Assistant Headteachers)SENDCo's (5 x 1 day per week) to share best practice and embed a common understanding of a universal offer for SEN in settings.
- Purchase, and embed, the Invision Quality Assurance Tool, to support the quality assurance framework and develop expertise in what this would look like.

PR advised that TfC would like to develop a "High Intensity Support Team" (of 2 Specialist Teachers and 2 Higher Level Teaching Assistants), who would sit within the current Specialist Support Service. PR explained that this Team would oversee the bespoke arrangements for the most complex children and would work with alternative provisions, where appropriate, to develop tailored packages. PR shared that this would provide an outreach service to work in schools to support children with complex needs, who may be at risk of non-attendance/ permanent exclusions and the focus would be on higher levels of need (including emotional school based anxiety/avoidance).

- A new role, of Digital Development Officer, to further progress the digital roll out of assessment and review processes, in line with the DfE aspirations within the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, to streamline bureaucracy and work "smarter".
- A Communication Officer, to develop and maintain the local offer and proactively support positive messages and examples of best practice/case studies to parents of children with SEND.
- The creation of a Transition Team, to sit under the new Strategic Transition Lead (3 posts within Early Years, Primary to Secondary and Post 16). These posts would develop and embed pathways to ensure a consistent approach and offer for young people with SEND.
- Additional resource within the Statutory Team, to support the Post 16 and Primary to Secondary Annual Review Team.

PR reiterated that the DBV bid had been submitted and passed the first of two quality assurance stages. PR explained that final confirmation of whether or not the bid had been successful should be received in the next few weeks, with funding allocated from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

PH thanked PR for the detailed information presented.

DA shared that the latest NE Schools Bulletin had detailed that issues were being encountered within SEND across the country. DA stated that he believed a more joined up approach was required in relation to messages relayed to Government,

advising that all strategies would be difficult without appropriate funding as this was a systemic problem.

DA noted that the presentation had indicated that the number of SEN children placed within primary and secondary schools was vastly different, but children were placed in specialist placements because this was detailed within their EHC plan. DA stated that the needs of SEN pupils within mainstream schools were more complicated, and he believed work was being undertaken to look at how schools could work collaboratively and at potential initiatives which could be implemented.

DA advised members that he would question if there was sufficient provision to meet SEN pupil needs, stating that he did not believe there was.

DA confirmed that he would share the information presented with the Diocese and stated that he believed members also needed to raise this within their respective forums. PH agreed, sharing that she had found the comparisons against other LA's interesting.

SM advised that no further capital funding could be accessed to build additional resources, sharing that at the current time Sunderland were in a position where they had more resource placements than other LAs, but some of the placements were being used by other LA's.

SM advised members that Ofsted grading for all of the specialist/alternative provisions within Sunderland was Good.

SM highlighted that the cost of new builds was increasing and stated that he did not believe the answer was to continue to build new resources but to look at how Sunderland could do things differently.

PR confirmed DA's statement that specialist provisions were named within EHC plans but provided assurance that TfC worked hard to ensure children were placed appropriately, but this was in line with the legal framework and parental preferences. PR shared that having correct information within EHC plan applications was a key area, which was the reason for focusing on this area, explaining that the information provided helped during discussions with parents and meet legal requirements, and the correct information was required to ensure any decisions made were both appropriate and garnered parental confidence. PR assured members that the proposals were not to stop children being placed in specialist provisions where this was appropriate.

LW thanked DA for his comments, sharing that she would take these forward within her network meetings and acknowledged the issues encountered raised concerns. LW stated that she believed all parties were aware of the massive under funding situation. LW acknowledged families were concerned because they were aware that there was additional funding and fought to

<p>get their child into a specialist provision and shared that she believed better communication with parents, to explain the opportunities available within mainstream schools, would be beneficial.</p> <p>CD confirmed that he was also happy to share the information presented within the forums he attended. CD advised colleagues that he had attended a forum where Mr Waller had spoken, in relation to using resources appropriately.</p> <p>CD advised colleagues that he was aware staff members had involved themselves to try to improve processes, for example transition, and queried if there were any suggestions to unify services within the proposal, for example mental health, stating that he did not believe Children &amp; Young Persons Services (CYPS) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) could stand alone. PR agreed with this statement and shared that health colleagues were engaged in the DBV process and there was a real appetite for system changes, and there were now pilots being implemented. PR stated that it may be beneficial to have a representative from the <b>CBCL to attend a future SF meeting, Michelle Thompson</b>.</p> <p>JW shared that he was a member of a couple of national bodies who lobbied and worked with the DfE. JW shared that Sunderland was in a more positive position than neighbouring LA's (in relation to the percentage of pupils with complex needs currently in mainstream education and the percentage of pupils with less complex needs in specialist provisions) and stated that he believed Sunderland needed to acknowledge, and commend, their practices.</p> <p>JW shared that work was undertaken with DfE and Ofsted, stating that one of the pressure areas for schools was results/performance, which could be detrimentally affected by their SEND cohort. JW stated that discussions were being held to highlight the need for a mechanism to work around this issue. JW stated that he believed the success of some of the pilot schemes implemented would improve going forward.</p> <p>MH thanked PR for the presentation presented but questioned the evidence which indicated that 20% of cases should not have resulted in an EHC plan. PR explained that the overall number was actually low and one of the difficulties was if an EHC plan was deemed not appropriate parents could appeal the decision. PR shared that there were 2 decision opportunities within the EHC plan process: the first was the decision to undertake a needs assessment and the second was toward the end of the assessment process, where the decision would be about whether or not to issue an EHC plan. PR stated that she believed the decision making process was quite tight. MH queried if there were any interim steps, for example school based plans, to support the child to remain in mainstream education. PR confirmed that these plans were implemented in schools and pupils would have school based SEN Support Plans and provided an overview of the current processes implemented.</p>	<p>Action (24.1.24 - awaiting response)</p>
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	<p>DW explained that discussions within the Secondary Headteacher's Forum had been focused on developing alternative resource provisions (ARPs) but queried if there were any proposals for an ARP for primary. PR advised that there were currently 2 ARP provisions within secondary schools and the proposal was to expand this provision offer. PH stated that taking into consideration the SEMH issues being identified she believed expanding the ARP provisions available would be beneficial.</p> <p>SM stated that where possible TfC would like all children currently placed in a resource outside of Sunderland to attend provisions within Sunderland, and they wanted children to be able to receive an education with their own communities. SM shared that he believed the solutions sat internally, explaining that it was always easier to design resource provisions internally. SM advised that one of the benefits of the projected falling rolls would be the additional space which schools would have available.</p> <p>SM extended an open invitation for Headteachers to contact him if they were interested in opening an ARP resource within their school.</p>	
24/07	<p><b><u>Reports for Discussion and Decision</u></b></p> <p><b>Commissioning High Needs Places for 2024/2025 in Specialist and Alternative Provisions</b></p> <p>Members <b>RESOLVED</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This item of business would be deferred until the next meeting of the Schools Forum.</li> </ul> <p><b>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Update and Projected</b></p> <p>Members confirmed they had received the following report prior to the meeting for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Dedicated School Grant Update and Projected Outturn 2023/2024 (dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024)</li> </ul> <p>SGR commended the presentation presented by PR, stating that this recognised the volatility of different funding blocks and the fact that these situations should not be ignored.</p> <p>SGR reported that the 2023/2024 DSG in year forecast outturn position was a projected deficit of £3,525,026, as at January 2024. SGR stated that this was an increase in the deficit, of £1,212,790 compared to the deficit reported at the October 2023 Schools Forum: the overall DSG deficit, as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, was projected to increase to £8,051,248.</p> <p>SGR extended his thanks to DD for the work undertaken, stating that this was in line with the information presented in relation to the number of EHC plans. SGR stated that he believed the DBV presentation had been very insightful.</p>	

SGR advised that the Schools Block was currently projected to be underspent by £598,225, at the end of the current financial year: this was due to projected underspends in Growth funding, of £480,171, and Academy rates savings following conversion, of £118,054.

SGR reported that the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) was projecting an overall underspend of £143,824: this was due to an underspend, of £100,352, in the historical school redundancy budget and an underspend of £43,472 in the Admissions Team.

SGR advised that as of January 2024 the overall Early Years Block budget was projected to be overspent by £12,448, compared to the reported underspend in October 2023, of £30,840.

**Members RESOLVED:**

- To note and accept the report, as presented.
- Updates on the projected 2023/2024 position would be reported at the next meeting.

**Budget Planning Framework 2024/2025**

Members confirmed they had received copies of the following reports prior to the meeting for consideration:

- Budget Planning Framework 2024/2025 (dated 11 January 2024)
  - Appendix B: Budget Planning Framework

SGR commended the work undertaken by JHo on the budget plan.

SGR explained that proposals had been considered within previous Schools Forum meetings and the report now detailed the figures for individual settings. SGR stated that the approach agreed was the most equitable solution for all and explained that the model presented detailed the Minimum per Pupil Funding factor and the Minimum Funding Guarantee.

PH advised members that a proposal had been put forward to defer formal consideration of the report and to hold an additional Schools Forum meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024, this would provide an opportunity for the report to be considered by Headteacher colleagues and for representatives to put forward a vote. SM explained that the governance principles of the Schools Forum was to provide representatives with an opportunity to raise proposals within their individual forums and queried when the next Headteacher cluster meetings were scheduled. ZW confirmed that the next Headteacher cluster meetings were to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

**Members RESOLVED:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To agree the Early Years Funding Formula principles to be applied in 2024/25 (3 and 4 year old hourly rate and Lump Sum).</li> <li>- To defer the 2 Year old formula to the next Forum following consultation.</li> <li>- Agree to the submission of the Local Funding Formula proforma (summarised overleaf) to the ESFA by 22 January 2024, subject to Cabinet approval.</li> </ul> <p><b>Growth and Falling Rolls Report</b></p> <p>Members <b>NOTED</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This item of business had been deferred until the next meeting.</li> </ul>	
24/08	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>Members <b>NOTED</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There were no additional items of business to be considered.</li> </ul>	
24/08	<p><b><u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u></b></p> <p>Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 8.30 am Venue: Meeting to be held virtually</p>	

Subject To Approval

## REPORT TO SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS' FORUM

### REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

15 February 2024

#### 2 year old and under Early Years Funding Formula 2024/25

##### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to:
  - Notify Schools Forum of the 2 year old and under Early Years Funding Formula for 2024/25; and
  - Agree the 2 year old and under Early Years hourly funding rates to be adopted for 2024/25 and the payment arrangements for next financial year.
- 1.2 The report builds on the Schools' Funding Reform / Budget Planning Framework 2024/25 agenda item discussed at the Schools Forum meeting held on 11 January 2024.
- 1.3 Forum to note the 3 and 4 year old formula was agreed at 11 January Forum therefore the following report relates to funding for 2 year olds and under.

##### 2. Early Years Funding Formula 2024/25

- 2.1 As previously advised, Early Years has been funded through a National Funding Formula (EYNFF) since April 2017, based on January census data. A provisional allocation is received within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement announced in late December. This allocation is based on lagged January census data. The final allocation for a financial year is not received until the July following the year.

#### **The following is applicable as usual for 3 and 4 year olds and disadvantaged 2 year olds**

Provisional 2024/25 allocation based on January 2023 census data.

Final 2024/25 allocation is based on:

- five twelfths January 2024 census data to cover the months of April 2024 to August 2024 and,
- seven twelfths January 2025 census data to cover the months of September 2024 to March 2025.

**For the new entitlements of working parents of 2 year olds and under the following will apply for 2024/25 – a temporary measure during the implementation.**

### **2 Year olds - working parents.**

- Funding will be based on actual headcount submissions in Summer 2024, Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025.

### **9 months to 2 Year olds - working parents.**

Initially ESFA intended to fund Local Authorities (LAs) based on 22 weeks equivalent to around 7/12<sup>th</sup>. Following discussions with LAs, concerns were raised due to funding paid to providers for this this period is normally 26 weeks (14 weeks Autumn and 12 weeks Spring).

This would cause either underfunding (c£400k) or having to reduce the rate to providers significantly to account for the shortfall.

ESFA has since revised under 2 year old funding to LAs to reflect 26 weeks. The initial published ESFA rate per hour provided to LAs, however, remain the same.

- Funding will be based on actual headcount submissions based on 14/38<sup>th</sup> Summer PTEs and 12/38<sup>th</sup> Spring PTEs. 1 PTE equates to 1 x 15 hour child.

## **3. Funding Entitlements**

The early years entitlements are:

- the 15 hours entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds.
- the 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 2-year-old children (new entitlement from 1 April 2024).
- the 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of children from 9 months to 2 years old (new entitlement from 1 September 2024).
- From September 2025, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months and above will be able to access 30 hours.

### **3.1 Requirements for the 2 year old and under formula**

- extending the **95%** pass-through requirement to the disadvantaged 2-year-old entitlement and the new working parent entitlements.
- a requirement for local authorities to have a disadvantaged 2-year-old rate that is **at least** equal to their rate for 2-year-old children of working parents.
- confirming the expectation that local authorities have special educational needs **inclusion funds** (SENIFs) for all children with special educational needs (SEN) eligible for or taking up the new and existing entitlements, regardless of the number of hours taken.

- extending eligibility for **EYPP** and **DAF** to eligible children aged 2 years old and under accessing the entitlements from 2024 to 2025.

### 3.2 Funding Proposal for 2 year olds and under

The rate paid for disadvantaged 2 year olds in 2023/24 in April 2023 was £5.63 rising to £7.27 in September 2023. Sunderland paid out the full rate received from ESFA to providers during that time (no supplements).

From April 2024 Local Authorities need to provide for Early Years Inclusion and are allowed to retain up to 5% for central services for the 2 year old and under entitlements. This means passing through at least 95% of the funding available.

To maximise the funding rates to providers, Sunderland’s proposal is to continue with a flat rate paid to providers for 2 year olds from April 2024, Under 2 year olds from September 2024, and a funding pass-through rate overall of 99.07% (see 3.4).

After taking into account Early Years inclusion, the retained element and affordability the following rates are proposed:

- Disadvantaged 2 year olds - the proposed rate from April 2024 is **£7.75** per hour for 570 hours p.a. This represents an increase of £0.48 per hour from the final rate in 2023/24, a £2.12 increase from the allocated rate in April 2023.
- 2 year olds (working parents) the proposed rate from April 2024 is **£7.50** per hour for 570 hours p.a.
- 9 months to 2 year old (working parents) the proposed rate from September 2024 is **£10.30** per hour for 570 hours p.a.

### 3.3 Consultation

Consultation documents were issued regarding the proposed formula and rates on 17 January 2024. In total 36 Responses were received out of 76 providers currently offering places to 2 year olds.

The two questions asked to providers of 2 year olds:

1. *Do you agree that in order to maximise the rates to all providers, a flat base rate for each entitlement is applied (ie no supplements as this would significantly reduce the base rate offered)*

£7.75 per hour for 570 hrs p.a.- eligible disadvantaged 2 Year Olds

£7.50 per hour for 570 hrs p.a.- eligible working parents of 2 Year Olds

£10.30 per hour for 570 hrs p.a. - eligible working parents of 9 months to 2 year old from September 2024.

Of the 36 responses,

Agreed	30	83%
Disagreed	0	0%
Unsure	6	17%

2. *Supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds remains a priority. Do you agree that a higher rate be paid for the most disadvantaged 2 year olds.*

Of the 36 responses,

Agreed	30	83%
Disagreed	2	6%
Unsure	4	11%

Comments received:

Q1: *“It would be best to get as much as possible to providers so they can adjust their offer to working parents. We have to manage our budgets and the less flux in the rates the easier it is to do this.”*

Q2: *“Funded 2 year olds tend to have more complex families and safeguarding tends to be needed. They also tend to have only started at two when the funding became available unlike parents who can afford to pay. This means their ppsed is lower and they need more support.”*

General: *“Underfunding limits the number of nursery places we can offer.”*

General: *“It is paramount that as much of the funding is delivered to the coal face we are struggling huge demand for service and a change in how we currently receive funding. My concern is that smaller settings may hit cash flow as the funding changes from private to public. Some balloon payments may be needed to ensure smooth transition.”*

### 3.4 Reconciliation and Pass-through calculation

Reconciliation	2 year old - Disadvantaged	2 year old - Working parents	Under 2s - Working parents - 26 wks Sep 24-Mar 25	Total
Hourly Rate	£7.75	£7.50	£10.30	
Base rate to providers	£3,717,591	£4,312,364	£2,404,038	£10,433,993
SEN Inclusion	£69,584	£81,891	£48,525	£200,000
<b>A Funding to Providers</b>	<b>£3,787,175</b>	<b>£4,394,255</b>	<b>£2,452,563</b>	<b>£10,633,993</b>
<b>B Central Team</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£62,792</b>	<b>£37,208</b>	<b>£100,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,787,175</b>	<b>£4,457,047</b>	<b>£2,489,771</b>	<b>£10,733,993</b>

C	ESFA provisional allocation	£3,787,174	£4,457,047	£2,489,771	£10,733,992
Max 5%	Central Team % B÷C	0.00%	1.41%	1.49%	0.93%
Min 95%	<b>Pass-through % A÷C</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>98.59%</b>	<b>98.51%</b>	<b>99.07%</b>

Variance from ESFA 11-01-24	£1	£0	£0	£1
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#### Other Funding

EYPP	£209,122	£10,458	£219,580
DAF	£71,890	£24,570	£96,460

#### **4. Disability Access Fund (DAF)**

4.1 Disability Access fund is £910 for all entitlements.

#### **5. Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)**

5.1 The EYPP remains distinct from the Early Year's National Funding Formula and will continue as a separate funding stream provided to Local Authorities in order to support disadvantaged pupils. The funding will continue to be paid within the DSG and has been increased to £0.68 per hour (£387.60 p.a.) for all entitlements.

5.2 The EYPP is only paid on the universal 15 hours.

## 6. Payment Mechanism and Term Dates

- 6.1 Early Years payments will continue to be offered either on a termly or monthly basis. Providers will remain on the current payment method unless a change is requested. Changes to the payment method cannot be made mid-term but will come into effect the following term if required.
- 6.2 The maximum 38 week funding allocation is normally funded based on 12 weeks (180 hours) in Summer, 14 weeks (210 hours) in Autumn and 12 weeks (180 hours) in Spring.
- 6.3 For 2023/24 this was changed to match the number of weeks in School terms based on 13 weeks (195 hours) in Summer, 14 weeks (210 hours) in Autumn and 11 weeks (165 hours) in Spring.
- 6.4 For 2024/25 there are complications around School term dates compared to Early Years dates as there are 40 weeks in the school year (Summer 2024 Autumn 2024 Spring 2025).
- In Summer term we would normally pay for 12 weeks, there are 13 weeks in school term.
  - In Autumn we would normally pay for 14 weeks, there are 14 weeks and 2 days in school term.
  - In Spring we would normally pay for 12 weeks, there are 13 weeks in school term.
- 6.5 If we were to continue with 13 14 11, this would leave 2 weeks unfunded at the end of Spring 2025. Therefore, it is proposed the revert back to 12 14 12 and split the 2 unfunded weeks between Summer and Spring.

Summer Term 2024	Early Years Term Dates (12 Weeks)	Max Funding	
<b>Early Years dates</b>	<b>Monday 15/04/2024 - Friday 12/07/2024</b>	<b>180 hours</b>	12 Wks
<i>School dates</i>	<i>Monday 15/04/2024 - Friday 19/07/2024</i>		13 Wks
Half Term	Monday 27/05/2024 - Friday 31/05/2024		

Autumn Term 2024	Early Years Term Dates (14 Weeks)	Max Funding	
<b>Early Years dates</b>	<b>Monday 09/09/2024 - Friday 20/12/2024</b>	<b>210 hours</b>	14 Wks
<i>School dates</i>	<i>Thursday 05/09/2024 - Friday 20/12/2024</i>		14 Wks & 2 days
Half Term	Monday 28/10/2024 - Friday 01/11/2024		

Spring Term 2025	Early Years Term Dates (12 Weeks)	Max Funding	
<b>Early Years dates</b>	<b>Monday 06/01/2025 - Friday 04/04/2025</b>	<b>180 hours</b>	12 Wks
<i>School dates</i>	<i>Monday 06/01/2025 - Friday 11/04/2025</i>		13 Wks
Half Term	Monday 24/02/2025 - Friday 28/02/2025		

## Payment Dates

Provisional payment dates for monthly and termly options are as follows:

12 Monthly Payments					
Summer	9-Apr-24	7-May-24	18-Jun-24	9-Jul-24	6-Aug-24
Autumn	3-Sep-24	8-Oct-24	12-Nov-24	10-Dec-24	
Spring	7-Jan-25	11-Feb-25	11-Mar-25		

6 Termly Payments		
Summer	9-Apr-24	18-Jun-24
Autumn	3-Sep-24	12-Nov-24
Spring	7-Jan-25	11-Feb-25

## 7. Summary of proposed 2024/25 Early Years 2 year old and under 2 year old Funding

	Rate p/hr	
2-year-old entitlements-Disadvantaged	£7.75	from April 2024
2-year-old entitlements-Working Parents	£7.50	from April 2024
9 months to 2-year-old-Working Parents	£10.30	from September 2024

Proposal to revert the termly funded weeks back to 12 weeks Summer, 14 weeks Autumn and 12 weeks Spring.

## 8. Recommendations

8.1 The Schools' Forum is recommended to agree:

- the Early Years 2 year old and 9 months to 2 year old formula
- the Early Years 2 year old and 9 months to 2 year old funding rates to be applied in 2024/25
- the funding be paid on the basis of 12 weeks Summer, 14 weeks Autumn and 12 weeks Spring.

# Proposal for revisions to the funding of the Communication Hub and Language Provisions from Sept 2024

## 1. Background

1.1 Currently there are two primary identified Speech and Language units across the City catering for 20 children in total. There is also the Communication Hub, which offers 10 places per term for children in Early Years and Key Stage 1.

- Northern Saints Primary school – currently funded for 10 places x £10k
- Valley Road Academy – currently funded for 10 places 10 x £10k
- Communication Hub (New Peshaw) 10 places (termly) x £10K per annum

1.2 The Language Units offer language support for up to six terms for children who have made limited progress following a period of intervention from the Intensive Interaction Team in SaLT. Children accessing the Language Provisions at Northern Saints or Valley Road attend for four days per week and return to their home school each Friday. There is currently no cost to schools for a placement in a Language Provision Unit and places are allocated via Language Panel, which operates in conjunction with SaLT.

1.3 The Communication Hub offers one term of focused communication interventions five days per week, supported by staff from Language and Learning Partnership, which includes SaLT input. The children must be actively known to SaLT (not Intensive Interaction Team). It is intended that this placement will meet the needs of the child without recourse to a statutory needs assessment by enabling them to make accelerated progress in their communication and language needs as a form of early intervention. Children return to their home setting with an enhanced support plan and strategies to support communication needs. There is currently a cost of £65 per day for places at the Communication Hub, with the exception of Nursery age children who have been funded through the Early Years Inclusion Fund. Places are allocated via a panel, which operates with input from SaLT.

1.4 The Language Units and the Communication Hub do not take children with EHCPs and therefore receive no top up funding above the £10,000 per commissioned place. Together for Children’s Service Level Agreements stipulate staffing of One Teacher plus 1 Teaching Assistant for the 2 Language Units and 1 teacher plus 1.5 Teaching Assistants for the Communication Hub (due to the extra staffing requirements for taking Early Years Children). Recent increases in pay for Teachers and Teacher Assistants has meant that the base funding is creating a significant risk of financial deficit for the provisions. The situation is more acute for the Communication Hub given the higher staffing ratio required by Nursery aged children.

<b>Teaching staff</b>	
Teacher UPS1 + SEN 1	£66,292 (including pay and pension increases up to 2024/5 previous actual and estimate)
<b>Teaching assistant</b>	
TA Grade 2 Top SCP6	£29,884 (including pay increases estimated for 2024/5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£96,176</b>

## 2. Proposal to amend funding for the Language Provisions and Communication Hub

2.1 from September 2024 the Communication Hub will no longer take Nursery age children as currently this is a draw on our Early Years Inclusion funding of £30,000 per annum. The funding previously allocated to the Communication Hub will be available for allocation for all settings applying to the Inclusion Fund via the normal process, which is a more equitable use of the funding and likely to impact a higher number of children.

2.2 The Communication Hub will take children from Reception to end of Key Stage 1 and operate on a staffing ratio of 1 Teacher and 1 Teaching Assistant, bringing it in line with the staffing within the two Language Provisions.

2.3 All three provisions will receive an increase to the base funding of £600 per place which will ensure the cost of the staffing is not likely to cause a deficit position for the settings. This is in line with the increase to base rates previously agreed for other commissioned provisions.

2.4 The daily charge for the Communication Hub will be removed making the offer equitable with the Language Provisions. The key difference being the Communication Hub is designed to be an earlier stage intervention aimed at children with a lower level of presenting need. The aim being early intervention could potentially avoid the need for escalation to statutory assessment. The daily charge has been a barrier to children accessing the provision given the financial constraints already facing schools. Removal of the charge is an investment in early intervention for this cohort of children and needs to be considered within the context

of Sunderland's rising EHCP rates. Data tells us that Reception is a key spike point in EHCP referrals and SLCN are our third highest area of Primary Need. Therefore, evidence gathered as part of the DBV process would suggest that this investment from the High Needs block could be considered a reasonable mitigation against rising EHCP referrals, which should produce future savings in terms of preventing needs escalating.

2.5 The Secondary Language Provision, based at Hetton School will be unaffected by these funding changes as the children in this provision have an EHCP and are therefore in receipt of a top-up via the existing ARP banding structure.

### **3 Review of provision to meet communication and language needs across the City**

3.1 The ICB are currently in the process of reviewing the commissioned arrangements for Speech and Language Therapy within Sunderland. It therefore seems timely that we take the opportunity to review our language offer within Sunderland. A formal review of the two Primary Language Units, Communication Hub and the Secondary Language ARP, based at Hetton School, will take place during the academic year 2024/5. This review will inform and shape our provision in this area from Sept 2026 and beyond as this review would not likely to be concluded before the next commissioning cycle for 2025/6, which takes place before November 2024. The review will consider feedback from current provisions, wider education settings, SaLT, Specialist Support teams and parents / carers. The result of this review and any proposals from it will be presented to School's Forum for decision.

### **4 Financial implications**

4.1 The costs of increasing the base funding for the 3 Primary provisions is £18,000 (£6,000 per provision)

4.2 The estimated cost of removing the daily charge for children in Key Stage 1 will be £60,615 (based on 70% up take of fundable places). Balanced against this the additional £30,000 available for the Early Year's Inclusion Fund which has been overspent in 2023/4. Making the total estimate cost **£48,615**

### **5. Recommendations**

5.1 The Schools Forum is recommended to:

- i. Note the contents of the report.
- ii Agree to the allocation of funding as described within section 2 of this report.