

Agenda Item 5

Report to: Schools Forum
Date: 14th July 2017
Title of Report: High Needs Block Review
By: Emily Taylor



Purpose of Report: To provide an update on the High Needs Block Review.

1. Background

Following consultation with local authorities, in December 2016 the Department for Education released revised Schools and high needs national funding formulae through which East Sussex is likely to see an increase in its high needs funding of 2.78%. A further round of consultation closed in March 2017 setting out final proposals, which once again included the recommendation that local authorities keep special educational provision under review for which a strategic planning fund of £210.000 has been provided.

The review of the high needs block in East Sussex will build on existing momentum and collaborative work between the LA and schools. Funding has been used to second staff responsible for inclusion and SEND in schools to lead on this work. **Appendix A** provides more detail of the review process.

2. Progress and Supporting Information

- The first two of the series of working groups for two strands have taken place: special facilities in mainstream schools and alternative provision. These were populated by representatives from 25 schools
- Two further working groups are taking place before the end of term 6: Special schools and mainstream top up. There are over 30 more schools signed up to these groups
- A further three strands will begin in term 1: post 16, statutory assessment and parents and carers. Again over 30 further school and college delegates have signed up commitment to participating in these strands
- Six of the seven strands are led by staff seconded from schools who are engaged for 1-2 days a week over the coming academic year
- East Sussex will coordinate activity across SE19 to engage a splinter group to look at potential for joint funding initiatives across neighbouring LAs. The first of these meetings takes place on 11th September
- Initial expressions of interest and conversations have begun regarding expansion/development of special facilities in mainstream schools and potential models for alternative provision in primary and secondary sectors
- Local, statistically neighbouring and national data and evidence is being drawn together to establish reasonable benchmarks for funding
- Meetings with immediate neighbouring SEN colleagues in Kent and Brighton and Hove take place in early September

- A round of visits are planned to other LAs of interest including Essex and Gloucester, targeted through positive local area inspections and data on low incidence of statutory assessments

3. Next Steps

- Further representation sought from schools and academies/academy trusts across the County so that; recommendations are owned; facilitation of a school to school accountability model; consistency of practice prevents perverse incentive around SEN offer of individual schools; there is swift traction for future changes once recommendations have been gathered.
- Following initial working groups, findings will be presented to colleagues from health and care for input into feasibility and commissioning. The initial platform to determine on-going joint service work will be ISEND Governance steering group
- All strands will consider how recommendations and proposals will be cascaded to all schools in the County, and a robust accountability model developed to ensure consistency in practice
- All strands will consider governance and longevity of planned changes