Schools Forum July 2022

Agenda item 6

Outreach Service Update

Report from: Celia Buxton, AD Education and SEND

## Background

In Dec 2021 the schools forum agreed to top-slice of £505,000 from the schools block to pay for the existing school support contracts from the Fortis Trust and the Marlborough Centre outreach services.

At the time, the school’s forum was asked to consider 4 options:

1. Agree a top slice and continue current arrangements
2. **Agree a top slice and review current arrangements over a transition period**
3. Cease agreement to the top slice and the service continue through a traded model with options around subscription or pay as you go. (it is noted that the decision to ‘trade’ would be that of the providers)
4. Cease agreement to the top slice and discontinue the services moving forward

The forum agreed to option 2. This option recognised the need to ensure that current services were not disrupted by sudden changes to the system and agreed to continue the system whilst taking the time to reflect on and engage in the co-production of a wider wholistic system of sustainable school support, which included:

* Identification of the current priorities and support needed.
* A transparent and robust procurement and commissioning exercise if needed.
* Review of other evidence-based research and strategies.

Medway council, in making this recommendation, set out it’s expectation of the timeframe in which support for schools would be considered.

*‘To develop the most impactful approaches, it is necessary to understand more fully the current challenges, research effective methodologies and co-produce an impactful system of support for schools. If this requires additional investment from the schools’ block then this option allows time to consult on this and engage in a transparent commissioning arrangement, to ensure value for money.*

*Co-production of the new system would also consider other alternative funding arrangements to support schools, including delegation or devolution of some resource.*

*In recognition that there is a need for this to be completed in a timely manner, we are proposing the following notional timeframe for a phased development of the new system’*

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|  | ***Overarching Principles*** | ***Timeline*** |
| ***Phase 1*** | *Understanding of challenges* | *Jan 22 – Mar 22* |
| ***Phase 2*** | *Research, co – production, development activity* | *Apr 22– Sept 22* |
| ***Phase 3*** | *Early Implementation of a countywide approach. Piloting activity, where appropriate.**Commissioning would need to start in Sept.* | *Sept 22 – Dec 22* |
| ***Phase 4*** | *Transition to the new model.*  | *Jan 23 – Mar 23* |

*-Schools forum – Outreach Services report Nov 2021*

**2. Phase 1: Understanding of challenges**

Significant activity has been undertaken to understand the challenges and the context of the current system to support schools. This activity includes:

* Detailed forecasting work identifying future need, presenting need type and areas for development.
* Attendance at various forums to discuss successes and challenges, including MELA exec and zones, Special school and AP headteachers, MSHA, CEO group, SENCO forums and MPCF.
* In-house review of systems structures and processes.

**3. Phase 2: Research, co – production, development activity**

Since April, the co-production work for the new system is making progress, the following activity has taken place to inform the co-production of the new system support required:

* Task and finish group re inclusion, which included mapping of existing offer and providing feedback on desires of schools.
* Task and finish group re EHCP funding
* Discussions re SSG capacity with Primary headteachers
* July meeting planned with secondary head teachers to look systems to support inclusion – looking at systems used in other LA’s

Whilst this activity is not complete, the first activity will start to be implemented from the new academic year.

Note: both providers have been integral to this work, have representation on all the task and finish groups.

**4. Proposal**

Given that we are currently in line with the proposed timeframe, we are recommending that the schools forum is not requested to transfer the funding to support these services in future years.

This does not mean that support for children will not run. Pending the system redesign it is likely to not be required in the same format. The providers, who are actively involved in the development work will be required to go through a procurement function to offer the service moving forward, this will then be funded through the HNB inclusion funding. The alternative option is for the service providers to offer it as a traded service.

Note: Whilst we are not proposing that this funding continues, it is still our intention to request the 0.5% schools block transfer for the inclusion funding for a further year. At which point we hope to fund the inclusion funding directly from the HNB.

**5. Financial Considerations**

As requested by the SF in November, both providers were given verbal and written notice of the intention to cease this arrangement from April 2023. (Appendix 1)

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Content of letter sent to providers in December 2021.

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Dear

Re: Behaviour support provision

The schools forum met on the 1st of December to discuss the continued top slice of the schools block to provide the commissioned behaviour services provided by you. They considered the options on the attached report. The decision of the forum was to agree the local authority recommendation, option 3.2:

***Agree the top slice and review current arrangements over a transition period***

*This option recognises the need to ensure that current services are not disrupted by sudden changes to the system and proposes to agree to continue the system whilst taking the time to reflect on and engage in the co-production of a wider wholistic system of sustainable school support, which will include:*

* *Identification of the current priorities and support needed.*
* *A transparent and robust procurement and commissioning exercise if needed.*
* *Review of other evidence-based research and strategies.*

**For the avoidance of doubt, this agreement is for the period of 1 year only and funding will cease for this in April 2023.**

Behaviour support services may well be part of the future system (see section 4 of the report) but to clarify that if this is the case, service providers will need to submit a tender for this as part of the new commissioning processes.

I appreciate that this is a difficult situation to manage in terms of staffing and ongoing provision. We will work as quickly as possible on identifying the next steps and I am happy to meet with you to discuss in more detail.

To be clear, as is outlined in the report, this decision makes no explicit or implied judgement on the quality of the current provision. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you and your staff for their ongoing hard work and commitment.

Kind regards