

High Needs Sub-Group Minutes Thursday 7th September 2023

Time: 14:00 to 15:30

No.	Time	Item	Speaker
1	14:00	Welcome and apologies	Steve Tanner
2	14:05	Minutes from meeting of Meeting of 4th of May and review of action log	Steve Tanner
3	14:10	Membership and Chairing arrangements	Steve Tanner
4	14:15	Reiteration of purpose of the group and Terms of Reference	Steve Tanner
5	14:25	Safety Valve Update	Michael Crow / Kate Bingham
6	14:45	High Needs Block Monitoring and Finance Update	Tim Gibson
7	15:05	Work plan for the year – including budget setting timetable for 2024/25	Tim Gibson
8	15:20	Any other business	Steve Tanner
9	15:25	Date setting of future meetings	Steve Tanner

Welcome and apologies

Present: ST, GM, MC, KB, SR, TG, LO-P, KH, KW, SL, EP, YA,

DRAFT

Absent: AB,ND,JB,VA,EN,PB

- **Apologies received from Nikki Tilson, asked to be removed from the group due to capacity issues**
- **Apologies received from Catharine May, Headteacher SSSO**
- **Apologies from Aron Brown, Nina Dohel, P Baker also Group introduced themselves**

Minutes from meeting of Meeting of 4th of May and review of action log

- **Action: SL raised a question around benchmarking data for top up rates that was shared with the Special School Heads Group. It was unclear if all queries had been addressed. SL to follow up outside of the meeting.**

Reiteration of purpose of the group and Terms of Reference/Membership

The group reviewed and reminded itself of the ToR and whether the membership was right to fulfil the group's objectives. It was suggested that a focus on inclusion in mainstream schools would also be a relevant addition. The group also noted the need to ensure representation from 2 mainstream primary and secondary schools as per the ToR.

Action: ST to amend ToR in light of discussion.

Safety Valve Update

KB/MC update that strategically the council are working through each section of the SV agreement

ST adds

MC introduces himself and flags that lots of activity is due to start this month and plans to set out the collaboration needed from school leaders which will be needed to deliver the targets and achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people.

LF asks how many school places are the council looking to develop, KB replies that 2 resources bases with 8 places each (Robert Browning/Peter Hills) have been successful, but further delay to other AST places in the SV monitoring report.

ST requests linking the inclusion and upskilling our mainstream schools to meet the needs of children with AST, developing autistic friendly schools

ST asked colleagues about the wider understanding of early years, schools, and the post 16 sector about Southwark's SV agreement:

KW updates that she feels many head teachers need to be more aware and updated on the SV project, and what is expected in collaborating.

KH states that heads are striving to ensure the children in provision have best services possible, there is pressure on places and balancing this with the high standard of care for young people.

LF asks what the plan is to upskill mainstream schools, SR replies that Southwark has published the guide for SEND Standards, and recruited 3 SEND Mainstream consultants, giving bespoke support to meet the needs of pupils in schools in the borough.

LF asks what proportion of children are seeking out of borough provisions, ST replies that he does not have an exact figure to hand but that places in the independent sector are continuing.

ST emphasised that the council want to ensure a more consistent approach to inclusivity across the borough to ensure mainstream pupils with SEND have a better experience and schools feel supported.

KB updated that 93 children out of borough, with 63 were in independent provision. She noted that we don't want to create demand by increasing supply but are seeking to bring children back to Southwark into newly created provision.

SL stressed that there are children with complex needs requiring bespoke provision, whose needs cannot be met in existing specialist schools in Southwark.

High Needs Block Monitoring and Finance Update

TG updates that Southwark are forecasting an overspend for this financial year but that this is expected to be in line with the DSG Management Plan.

Work plan for the year – including budget-setting timetable for 2024/25

Budget Setting Timetable

Timetable for 2024/25 and 2025/26

When	
July 2023	<p>DfE Headline funding announcements re 2024/25 DSG NFF allocations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional £440m nationally which is equivalent to 4.3% • Funding floor set at 3% (on adjusted baseline that includes the additional grant that was allocated in December 2022 following Autumn announcement) (per head of population) • Gains cap set at 5% (per head of population)
August 2023	<p>Announcement of Teachers Pay Additional Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwark allocated £291k for 2023/24 (i.e. Sept 23 to March 24) and will receive a further allocation 2024/25; based on place numbers
December 2023	Updated 2024/25 DSG allocation will be notified to LA's
January 2023	Schools Forum will make recommendations regarding the allocation of the schools and High Needs Budgets (including top-up rates)
February 2023	Council agrees budgets
Summer 2024	Proposal that the Authority Carry out a more detailed review and consultation regarding top-up rates (note that this has not been agreed yet)
September 2024	Findings of review and recommendations to be considered in line with Safety Valve

TG shares the above timetable with the group, which indicates the budget-setting timetable.

ST asks the implications for timetable in terms of the group, TG answers that the group should be aware of the information.

KH asks for clarity if the frozen top up rate reviews will be reviewed with individual schools,

TG outlines that a more detailed review will take place next year, and if additional funding is allocated by the DfE then any conditions attached to the funding will be taken into consideration. Benchmarking showed that Southwark was providing 21% higher rates than our statistical neighbours, and reiterated that in line with the SV the top-up rates are protected and will not be decreased or increased, they will stay level (subject to any other conditions mandated by the DfE).

ST understands that the SV agreement states that top-up rates will remain the same for the duration of the safety valve agreement subject to an annual review by the schools forum. However, if top up rates are changed then savings will need to be made elsewhere.

KB updated that, in the end, the top-up rates were not frozen in the 23/24 financial year, as a result of the governments minimal funding guarantee for schools. Top up funding in real-terms has increased, TG confirmed this.

KW asks that information and decisions about schools budgets are better coordinated with school budget-setting decisions

ST notes the comment by KW and agrees, however the LA is somewhat constrained by the DfE funding timetables and decisions.

YA adds a note that transparency is not clear on this issue around schools and provisions being consulted on budget setting review, and asked if that is taking place or not.

KB answers YA by stating that she does not recognise the discussions YA is referring to. Reaffirms that in the SV the top up rates are in place until 2027, that decisions about the top-up rates are annual decision and also reaffirms that as top up rates were not frozen in 23/24, there was no need for a review, as they were increased by 3.4%.

SL asks that mechanisms are put in place to consult and communicate changes to top-up rates and budgets to schools when this is clearer.

Working plan for the HNAG:

KB asks how are the SV and the HNAG going to work in collaboration to support each other and review the interplay of all the priorities of both

ST echoes KB comment, and asks group to consider their priorities

KW adds that the group should come together to find a path forward

The group collectively note that meetings used to be in-person, and this enhanced the discussion further and collaborative approach

SL asks that we have clearly identified objectives for each meeting in order for more succinct collaboration

LF asks meetings to always take into consideration the needs of schools such as staffing issues,

SL states this is a 'task group', she would like a 'task'.
SR asks that we set specific objectives and find consensus around the objectives, and planning needs to be put in place, mapping these and planning these – which are priorities, which will be tackled first.

ST adds it isn't the 'what', but the 'how', example being Southwark has an aspiration for early years and early intervention, but a concrete plan on how to achieve this isn't in place yet.

YA comments that this group was set up to delve into the challenges of the HN budget, and the way forward (pre-existing the SV agreement), this group should be a solution-focused group around problem solving in the sphere of SEND provision in Southwark

- **Action: ST suggests that the group theme future meetings in line with pressure, priorities, and SV agreement – the first topic will be Inclusion in mainstream (featuring Sarah Redman).**
- **Action: LO-P to collect some thoughts from nursery staff on specific nursery issues.**
- **Action: Primary and secondary school leads to be asked to present briefly on the successful practice around inclusion and the challenges for each of those phases around achieving greater inclusivity for SEND pupils.**
- **Action: next meeting to be on-line and later in the day to reflect the school day**
Any other business
No other business
Date setting of future meetings

- **Action: GM to set-up a meeting in late November**

DRAFT