

Bristol Schools Forum

Proposal for Schools Forum to continue to support Education Transformation Programme in 2022/23

Date of meeting:	Tuesday 30 November 2021
Time of meeting:	5pm
Venue:	Zoom

1. Background & Context:

Discussions about investment began with Schools Forum in September 2019 following the local area SEND inspection which identified 5 areas of significant weakness instructed to be remedied via a Written Statement of Action. The council had already been investing heavily in this area and Schools Forum were asked to make an investment to support and extend the scope of the programme in recognition of the local area/whole-system response needed to improve outcomes in this area. The focus of the programme at this time was based primarily in SEND improvement activity, and proposal also sought to address the wider inclusion agenda.

Schools Forum agreed to invest on this basis and a transfer of 0.5% of the High Needs Block was agreed for 2020/21. An additional transfer in the sum of £1.4m was made in 2021/22. At the same as the first transfer occurred, the country went into its first national lockdown due the global pandemic.

2. Programme Phase 1 (Sept 2019 to March 2021) & Phase 2 (April 2021 to March 2022):

Despite the challenges presented by Covid, the Programme was able to continue and progress on its key aims and objectives, albeit a little more slowly than originally intended. Over the period September 2019 to the present day, the key areas of activity supported by Schools Forum funding include:

2.1 Sufficiency of Specialist Provision Project

This project was established to respond to the shortage of supply of specialist provision places in the city against known demand. An innovative approach was taken where existing education settings were invited to submit expressions of interest (Eoi) to provide new placements. The benefits of the approach taken are:

- Children and young people can be educated closer to their home, communities, and friends
- Reduced numbers of children and young people educated out of area
- Reduced pressure on Home to School Travel budget
- Increased inclusion for children and young people

Feasibility studies for each of the Eois established the potential number of placements in that setting, the capital cost and indicative construction timelines. Detailed dialogue with settings which had promising ideas were also completed. This informed decisions for projects to proceed where good quality placements would be realised in the right part of the city, in the shortest time, and within the budget envelope.

Additionally, discussions are being held to work in partnership with established providers from within the independent market to develop and tailor specialist provision, within the city to meet Bristol's individualised demand.

The specialist provision project has delivered 82 SEND placements for September 2021 with 16 SEMH places confirmed for November and the potential for another 110 between January and September 2022.

The Council has committed to deliver 450 SEND placements within the next three years. Specialist Provision Phase 2 began in November 2021 and will contribute to fill the gap between placements in the pipeline and this commitment.

Delivery of placements has been slower than anticipated due to:

- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education settings and the Local Authority. This especially impacted on the ability to support detailed conversations with settings regarding potential placements.
- Ability of external construction partner to schedule capital works which align to the academic year.

Work is continuing with education settings, the DfE and construction partners to deliver the schemes that have been identified. Additional placements will be announced when legal obligations have been agreed and are in place.

Following closure of the Specialist Provision Project, additional SEND placements will be delivered as business-as-usual activity in Phase 2 and beyond. A Specialist Placements Manager has been recruited to support this. Phase 2 will take the same broad approach as previously, incorporating the learning received from the Specialist Provision Project to speed up delivery of placements.

As before, education settings will be asked to provide Expressions of Interest to provide new specialist placements. However, the approach will be more targeted than in Phase 1 and submissions that meet defined criteria related to type of need and area of the city will be invited. The criteria will be informed by projections of future need. Quality of potential provision will be assessed at the start of the process. This will be completed in conjunction with DfE to ensure resource is focused on schemes that are likely to move forward.

Phase 2 has defined timescales so that all parties are clear on what is expected when. Regular sessions between the setting, DfE and construction partners will also ensure that communications between all parties are improved.

Schools Forum investment has funded a project manager, an education leader to undertake the detailed dialogues and is currently funding a Specialist Places Manager to see the work go forward to Phase 2 (funded to October 2022).

2.2 FLORA (Families, local offer, resources and Advice)

FLORA was originally proposed to Schools Forum as 'First Call' which described a single point of contact services for parents, carers and professionals – aligned to the Family Support and Inclusion Team – to ensure an accessible pathway to advice and referrals to SEND Local Offer for families that need support before or after an EHC Plan is in place (wording taken from published Written Statement of Action). The service was renamed FLORA following coproduction with parents and offers non-statutory support for children with the early identification of additional needs. These children and families are unlikely to be known to statutory social care or SEN. FLORA hold the 'early identification register' for SEND which currently has 504 children's names, having been identified as needing additional support. The children are identified through early years settings, and health. Systems are being created to align with the disabled children's register; data sets for sufficiency planning and throughput of EHC statutory pathways.

FLORA team have a phone line and email address which went 'live 'in June 2021. FLORA provides families with a single point of contact to help them to know where to go for support when they are at the early stages of understanding the needs of their children. Parents can contact the team via telephone or email, and professionals can also refer. Service user feedback is routinely collated and provides evidence of the positive impact of the team.

338 enquiries have been made to FLORA since March, and the number of enquires has grown month on month reaching 79 in September. The main reason for contact relates to autism (56 enquiries). Onward referrals include 7 to Education and 30 to SENDIAS (now known as 'SEND and You' – SAY) and there have been 9 pre-EHCP assessment conversations. On average it takes around 3-4 hours to deal with each query (excluding time on telephone calls) this includes making calls to other professionals and services; researching and tailoring information and advice; completing referral forms; collating response information then follow up with parent (Email and/or call).

Themes emerging from parents' and carers' contact:

- many of the parents have attended parental and specialist training courses but are unsure how to implement the systems into their home settings.
- Parent carers have expressed they feel shame, exhausted and embarrassed asking for help from other professionals and have welcomed someone listening to them; this has resulted in call times being extended.
- The FLORA team are also returning calls to parent carers to deal with multiple and at times complex issues.

Schools Forum investment pays for the Flora Team Manager and 3 Practitioners (funded to March 2022).

2.3 Attendance & Belonging Task Group

The ABTG was established in September 2020 and works across directorates to support improving attendance for pupils across the city. This work also includes exploring the reasons for the high levels of fixed term exclusions within Bristol when compared to statistical neighbours and core cities. The ABTG meets fortnightly and consists of a core team of colleagues expected to attend every meeting, with additional colleagues invited to attend to address specific attendance related issues. Each meeting produces an action plan that is carefully monitored through the Action Tracker. Topics covered by the ABTG include:

- Increase in Elective Home Education notifications
- Blended and Remote Learning Guidance
- Admissions arrangements
- Attendance of vulnerable groups
- The Children Missing Education Working Group Meeting – this has now been become the Attendance Working Group focusing on individual cases, cohorts and settings
- Temporary Education Arrangements – Pupils Missing Education and Negotiated Transfers

There has been significant work to ensure the data reporting regarding attendance and exclusions is fit for purpose to allow adequate analysis and subsequently appropriate actions put in place to address areas of concern. The review of data has been exploring issues associated with accuracy, quality, consistency and the impact of legacy data and systems. This work is almost complete, and the reports that can now be produced are providing colleagues and schools with a much greater understanding of suspensions at a granular level.

This information is being used to work with schools strategically and individually. There have been presentations and data sharing at the phase associations' meetings throughout lockdown and this work is being taken forward with the new data sets from a city-wide perspective. The focus is on targeted challenge and support for schools causing concern in relation to the inclusion agenda.

Schools and settings, who account for most of the fixed term exclusions in the city, will be provided with monthly reports so they can see their position in relation to exclusions with other settings and therefore facilitate the comparison of data. A named officer from the local authority will be allocated to each secondary school to discuss the issues surrounding their exclusions rates and areas of concern, as well as outlining the support and help that is available to reduce the risk of exclusion and the management of earlier intervention for pupils.

Schools Forum funding supports the work of this group with an ABTG Strategy Manager (seconded) and two ABTG officers (fixed term to August 2022).

2.4 Review of Alternative Learning Provision

An independent [review of Alternative Learning Provision \(ALP\)](#) was commissioned and undertaken in October and November 2020. The review provided 31 recommendations for improvement of the ALP system. The Council has accepted all the recommendations and committed £16.5m investment over a five-year period to deliver a range of initiatives outlined in a new Alternative Learning Provision Commissioning Strategy 2022-27. The recommendations cover the following areas:

ALP and SEND	refers to the current inter-dependency between SEND and ALP with actions to clarify and strengthen processes and relationships between these two areas. There are extremely high numbers of pupils with SEND with EHC Plans or proceeding through the EHC Needs Assessment process, currently in ALP. High numbers of pupils going to ALP are also presenting with additional needs, particularly SEMH, Speech and Language and low literacy and maths skills.
ALP and Schools	is concerned with supporting and challenging schools with the aim of implementing a graduated response to prevent exclusions and reliance on ALP
ALP and Data	indicates improvement is necessary in data capture to facilitate accurate planning and reporting.
ALP and Finance	shows ALP is used to cover a deficiency in the number of appropriate SEND placements and links to the current review of element 3 funding. While both the ALP and SEND budgets are from the 'High Need' block, different LA Officers are making different placements. A clear protocol for placing children/ young people with an EHC plan into AP needs to be agreed.
ALP and Commissioning	mandates a joint ALP and SEND commissioning strategy along with joint quality assurance processes. This links to the recommissioning of ALP in progress.
ALP and Safeguarding	covers the strengthening of systems for sharing key information between school and ALP, social and mental health support along with capturing the pupil and parent voice.
ALP and Post-16	will improve careers advice and guidance to young people and is concerned with moving post-16 support from Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding back into the Local Authority. It will also cover arrangements for supporting young parents.
ALP and Governance	links ALP to actions in progress with respect to corporate themes such as the WSOA and the Belonging Strategy. There is also the need for clear system-wide

strategic leadership of ALP as the ALP Hub has been working in isolation, with insufficient direction or accountability built into structures.
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The final [ALP Statement of Action \(ALP SOA\)](#) has been co-produced with stakeholders including education settings, children and young people, parent/carers and other interested parties. This will be achieved through formation of four reference groups which will help to co-produce the plans and also continue to be involved during delivery of the plan.

Schools Forums funding has been used to commission the independent review (complete) and fund the project manager and the Subject Matter Expert until March 2022.

2.5 Implementation of new High Needs Block funding framework

This project predated the current Education Programme, but it was bought into the portfolio and governance structure in September 2019. The project is charged with delivering a fairer more efficient process and funding matrix for schools to apply for support for children and young people to meet needs early and avoid needs escalating (to replace current Top Up Funding process). Following some delay caused by Covid, the project is now progressing well and has been awarded funding from the [Local Digital Fund Round 5](#) to develop the web interface for the new funding matrix. 49 councils applied to fund and only 9 were awarded so this is a significant achievement and one that will deliver a step-change in how schools and SENCOs experience the new process when it is launched later in 2022.

While largely delivered with in-house resources, Schools Forum funding enabled the acceleration of the matrix development by accessing Education Psychology consultancy and funded the developer who built the technical and financial functionality which will sit behind the user experience.

2.6 SEND School Improvement Offer

Delivering a SEND school improvement offer to all education settings to ensure the council is providing effective support and challenge to schools relating to what is 'ordinarily available' for all and the needs and outcomes of vulnerable learners.

2.6.1 SEMH Training Pilot

The SEND SIO signed up three schools for a SEMH training pilot (2 primary 1 secondary) in Term 6. The content of this training is practical – what to do in the classroom. Training was delivered as an INSET in one primary school and in the other two schools the SENDCO was trained to deliver the whole school training. This complements the [Relationships Based Approach](#) and the wider SEMH work happening across the city.

The SEND SIO is also working with a separate primary school on an induction programme for TAs which other schools have shown interest in. Feedback and levels of attendance demonstrate that there is a huge appetite for training from all school staff, so to maximise impact, sustainability and ensure ownership and development at a local level, this offer is aimed at upskilling SENDCOs and pastoral leads to enable them to deliver training and build their setting's capacity.

Alongside these developments, the SEND SIO has developed a short CPD twilight programme for SENDCOs and Pastoral Managers with the senior EP, CAMHS and the HoS Inclusion for this academic year.

2.6.2 Ordinarily Available Provision

The OAP is the key to Bristol schools' graduated response

- Following its 'soft' launch during the 2021 virtual SEND conference, 'March 4 SEND', initial training and briefings took place over the summer term for SENDCOs, Governors and Early Years colleagues.
- A supporting audit tool was developed and shared with schools
- A parent version is being co-produced with parent carers

The SEND SIO is leading on the full roll out and has shared with a wide range of stakeholders to help embed good practice. The approach to SENDCO training is a 'train the trainer' model, and the training slide deck was sent to all SENDCOs to deliver to the whole school staff. Training delivery is being monitored to measure reach and there will be a follow up session at the next SENDCO briefing.

2.6.3 Support for pupils in a mainstream setting awaiting specialist provision

To better support children and young people with SEND in a mainstream educational setting, BCC introduced a system to enable greater oversight of this cohort. This includes the Mainstream Awaiting Placement Panel (MAPP) whose purpose is to:

- Discuss the children and young people currently awaiting specialist placement.
- Offer an individualised approach to support children and young people, so they can continue to be educated in mainstream settings until an appropriate specialist setting is available.
- Keep the focus on learning in the current educational setting.
- Ensure all local options have been considered including supporting current mainstream provider with additional library of specialist support.
- Ensuring placements can be found as soon as possible.

The MAPP meetings are providing a robust challenge and consistency of approach to the decision-making process for each of the children and young people in this cohort and having a range of professionals in the meeting allows for a holistic approach to solution finding.

The SEND School Improvement Offer is fully funded by the Schools Forum investment and the above is a selection of the wide range of work taking place in this area.

2.7 Autism Education Trust (AET) Training

Education Settings: over 1,700 educational practitioners have been trained across early years, primary and secondary. Each setting identified an area for development which they will complete within a given period and this will be monitored through advice clinics. A detailed, progressive 3-year plan for a BAT competency framework, progression framework and AET standards is being embedded with school level agreement at cohort meetings.

AET Wider Workforce development:

- Families in Focus Autism Clinic discussed 6 cases with 60 Families in Focus colleagues in attendance, this will be a rolling programme at least 3 times a year
- Family Support & Intervention service appointed new Autism lead, linked with social care to map referral process and looking at different roles and support.
- Social Care Autism Awareness training bespoke course for social care practitioners
- BAND training for out of school activity clubs

Schools Forum investment paid for the 3-year AET licence (to 2023) and as well funding 2 specialist autism teachers (fixed term to August 2022)

2.8 DSG Management Plan

Around May/June 2020 – in response to the steep increase in HNB overspend – the Education Programme extended its remit to work in partnership with Schools Forums to enhance understanding of demand and supply management levers in order to publish a fully populated DSG Management Plan by March 2022. Task & Finish Groups were established for Early Years and High Needs Block to enable more detailed discussions to take place alongside the Schools Forum programme of meetings.

As part of this work, the project and interventions funded by the Education Programme were viewed through a deficit mitigation lens i.e., what will be/might be the financial benefit of each project or intervention. A series of hypotheses were formulated, and their impact analysed using tools developed by a Data & Finance Analyst. A sensitivity analysis was developed to predict changes to the deficit if (a) there are changes to pupil numbers in the different provisions and (b) if there are percentage changes to activities within each provision. These are then refined with Education DMT and Service Managers and grouped into themes **Demand Management** and **Supply Management**.

While this will continue to remain a work in progress and be required to be continually reviewed and adjusted, the outcome of the work and the mitigating impact that pre-existing Programme funded projects and interventions is considered to have on the overall DSG position is contained in the report DSG Management Plan also being presented to Schools Forum.

Schools Forum funding was used to employ the Data & Finance Analyst to work up the sensitivity analysis and scenario modelling tools. Other core programme roles contributed to the work in this area.

2.9 Other work supported by Schools Forum funding (some of which has now concluded)

Core Programme Team

The core programme team comprises various fixed-term resources which contribute to the day-to-day management and oversight of the programme and wider SEND/Written Statement of Action improvement work. It extends to developing and improving management information capability, particularly in relation to understanding the drivers for the increasing DSG deficit, as well project support capacity for projects without a dedicated project manager.

PASS and GCI Pilots

Two systems for the early screening and identification of student wellbeing across whole school communities in Bristol have been piloted (PASS and GCI). 10 schools took part and every participating school completed one full survey and attended two focus group-style, semi-structured interviews, to ascertain their experiences of the system they piloted in their setting. The interviews and survey have provided the primary source of data for the final project report and recommendations which are currently being considered.

SEND into EET

The original programme funded fixed-term appointments have concluded, however, on-going momentum is secured through a combination of capacity in the SEND team regarding support for young people with an EHCP into education (funded by the Programme) and the new We Work for Everyone employment support project (regarding support for young people with an EHCP into employment).

Significant improvements evidenced through EET participation performance alongside improved data cleansing and reporting. Young people waiting for their EHCP to be ceased reduced from 195 to 92 during this period.

Time4Change

An extensive project to deliver improvements across the statutory EHCP process with five key areas:

- Co-designing a new EHCP template
- Improving children and young people’s voice (Person Centred/PATH¹)
- Improving professional contributions through a new Professional IT Portal
- Improving family access to their children’s SEND files and all reports and documentation through a Family Portal
- Improving annual review – process and paperwork

Over the last 18 months each project area has gone through a comprehensive review, co-production and development; and going into 2022 will enter the implementation phase.

3. Programme Phase 3 (if funding approved):

In the event that Schools Forum choose to invest again in the Education Programme, an outline of the how the funding would be used is set out below:

Up to £400k	To sustain and continue some of the projects and interventions from Phase 1 and Phase 2 beyond current contracted end dates e.g., Flora team, SEND School Improvement Officer, SEND Partnership Engagement Manager and the core programme team. <i>This aligns to GREEN rated interventions in Appendix A.</i>
£200 to £300k	To explore additional deficit mitigation projects – identified through the DfE’s learning from the safety valve interventions – and fund their implementation if appropriate and relevant to Bristol’s context. <i>This aligns to RED rated interventions in Appendix A</i>
£900k to £1m	It is proposed to create a school-led/school-based programme of activity designed to support and drive schools in Bristol to meet a higher level of need in a more cost-effective way within mainstream settings, while maintaining the quality of provision, developing a culture in which demand is more effectively managed throughout the authority. This programme would be separate to the existing LA-based Education Programme and the management of it would be offered as a secondment opportunity from Bristol’s education sector. Bids would be invited from schools that can deliver measurable and scaleable change. Suggested themes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention & Support • Workforce Development & Capability • Reduction of suspensions of children with SEND • Decrease persistent absence of children with SEND • Demonstrates value for money, community/locality impact • Sustainability (exit strategy) Bids would be assessed by a Panel – drawn from LA officers, parent carer representation and school leaders – and funding decisions made. The seconded programme lead would be responsible for the monitoring of the overall programme, including dissemination of learning from successful projects across the sector. <i>This aligns to Amber rated interventions in Appendix A.</i>
£1.5m approx.	

¹ PATH – Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope

