



County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YL

21 June 2023

In accordance with the powers granted by Regulation 8(1A) of the Schools Forum (England) Regulations this meeting will be held through remote means.

Lincolnshire Schools' Forum

A meeting of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum will be held on **Thursday, 29 June 2023 at 1.00 pm as a Virtual - Online Meeting via Microsoft Teams** for the transaction of the business set out on the attached Agenda.

Access to the meeting is as follows:

Members of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum and officers of the County Council supporting the meeting will access the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

Members of the public and the press may access the meeting via the following link: [Agenda for Lincolnshire Schools' Forum on Thursday, 29th June, 2023, 1.00 pm \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/Agenda-for-Lincolnshire-Schools-Forum-on-Thursday-29th-June-2023-1.00-pm) where a live feed will be made available on the day of the meeting.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'DBarnes'.

Debbie Barnes OBE
Chief Executive

Membership of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum

SCHOOLS' MEMBERS

Nursery (1)

Amy Stancer (Head Teacher, St Giles Nursery School, Lincoln)

Special (1)

Kyna Adkins (Head Teacher, St Christopher's School)

Primary Maintained (6)

Primary Maintained Head Teachers (3)

Callum Clay, (Head Teacher, Sleaford Church Lane Primary School)
2 vacancies

Primary Maintained Governors (3)

Alan Howe, (Governor, Sutton on Sea County Primary School)
Tony Stevens, (Governor, The Holt Primary School, Skellingthorpe)
1 vacancy

Secondary Maintained Head Teacher (1)

Michele Anderson (Head Teacher, Spalding High School)

Secondary Academies (7)

Secondary Academies Head Teachers (4)

Steven Baragwanath (Head Teacher, University Academy, Holbeach)
Simon Pickett (Head Master, The King's School, Grantham)
2 vacancies

Secondary Academies Governors (3)

Professor Ken Durrands CBE, (Governor, The King's School, Grantham)
Jo Slessor (Governor, Carres Grammar School, Sleaford)
1 vacancy

Primary Academies (5)

Primary Academies Head Teachers (3)

Gavin Booth (Head Teacher, Boston St Thomas' C E Primary School)
Katie Graviil (Head Teacher, Kirkby la Thorpe C E Primary Academy)
1 vacancy

Primary Academies Governors (2)

2 vacancies

Special Academies (2)

Special Academies Head Teacher (1)

Leandra Mason (Executive Head Teacher, Lincolnshire Wolds Federation)

Special Academies Governor (1)

Dr Stephen Hopkins (Trust Chair of Communities Inclusive Trust)

Alternative Provision Academy (1)

Josh Greaves (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Wellspring Academy Trust)

NON-SCHOOLS' MEMBERS

Faith Groups (1)

Peter Tomlinson (Diocese of Lincoln)

Providers of 16 to 19 Education (1)

Heather Marks (Vice-Principal, Boston College)

Staff Trade Unions (1)

Andrew Watts (NEU)

Early Years Providers (1)

Julia Merivale (Trinity Day Nursery, Gainsborough)

**LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM AGENDA
THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2023**

Item	Title	Pages
1	Election of Chairman	
2	Election of Vice-Chairman	
3	Apologies for Absence/Replacement Members	
4	Declarations of Members' Interest	
5	Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 April 2023	7 - 10
6	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum - Constitution and Membership update <i>(To receive a report by Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead – Children’s Services, which provides the Forum with an update to the constitution and membership)</i>	11 - 58
7	Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula - Government consultation outcomes <i>(To receive a report by Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead – Children’s Services, which provides the Forum with an update on the Governments consultation response publication to Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula)</i>	59 - 64
8	Section 251 Budget Statement 2023/24 <i>(To receive a report by Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager – Schools Finance Team, which provides the Forum with a copy of the Section 251 (s.251) budget statement for the 2023/24 financial year)</i>	65 - 72
9	Annual Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities <i>(To receive a report by Sheridan Dodsworth, Head of Service Special Educational Needs and Disabilitites (SEND), which invites the Forum to consider and comment on the annual report on SEND)</i>	73 - 78
10	Early Years Annual Report <i>(To receive a report by Geraldine O’Neill, Sustainability & Development Manager, which provides the Forum with an update on the support provided to the early years and childcare sector during 2022/23 and outlines the priorities for the service for 2023/24)</i>	79 - 88

- 11 Portage Service** 89 - 98
(To receive a report by Sara Gregory, Commissioning Manager – Children’s Strategic Commissioning, which provides an overview of the findings from the review of the Portage Service and seeks support from the Forum on the recommendation to re-commission a Portage Service and to continue its funding from the High Needs Block of the Designated Schools Grant)
- 12 Academies and Trust Update** 99 - 102
(To receive a report by John O’Connor, Head of Education Support – Children’s Education, which provides the Forum with an update on the latest position regarding the number of Maintained Schools and Academies and the pupils in academies, and academy trusts)
- 13 Lincolnshire Schools' Forum Work Programme** 103 - 104
(This item provides the Schools' Forum with an opportunity to discuss potential items for future meetings, which will be subsequently included in the Work Programme)
- 14 Future Meeting Dates**
(The Forum is asked to agree the following meeting dates for 2024/25:
- *8 February 2024*
 - *18 April 2024*
 - *13 June 2024*
 - *10 October 2024*
 - *13 February 2025)*

<u>Democratic Services Officer Contact Details</u>	
Name:	Emily Wilcox
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Please note: for more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officer responsible for servicing this meeting

- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements

Contact details set out above.

All papers for council meetings are available on:

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/council-business/search-committee-records>

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LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM 20 APRIL 2023

PRESENT:

Kyna Adkins (Head Teacher, St Christopher's Special School), Alan Howe (Governor, Sutton on Sea County Primary School), Catherine Stratton (Head Teacher, Saxilby Church of England Primary School), Michele Anderson (Head Teacher, Spalding High School), Rachel Barrett FCCA (Governor, North Kesteven Academy), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The King's School, Grantham), Jo Slesser (Governor, Carres Grammar School, Sleaford), Simon Pickett (Head Master, The King's School, Grantham), Josh Greaves (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Wellspring Academy Trust) (Vice-Chairman) and Julia Merivale (Manager, Trinity Day Nursery)

Officers in attendance:-

Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance (Children's Services)), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer), Geraldine Willders (Head of Service - School Strategy), Eileen McMorrow (Programme Manager, Special Schools Strategy) and Tony Warnock (Operations and Financial Advice Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Amy Stancer, Gavin Booth, Katie Grivil, Simon Morley, Stephen Hopkins, Lea Mason and Peter Tomlinson.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Frances Green for her contribution to the Forum following her resignation from the Forum. He also thanked Tony Warnock, Financial Services Manager for his work to support the Forum and schools funding matters for the benefit of Lincolnshire Schools and wished him well for the future.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 19 JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4 BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SPECIALIST PROVISION STRATEGY: UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by the Programme Manager – Children’s (SEND), which provided an update on the implementation of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy.

The strategy was making significant changes to the exiting special education provision, creating an integrated and sustainable school system where pupils could attend their nearest special school, confident that their education and health needs could be fully met.

The Building Communities of Specialist Strategy commenced implementation in 2019 and would be completed by Spring 2025. Implementation was well underway with a number of capital schemes complete.

The Forum noted the key milestones for the capital programme which had been met in the reporting period:

Official Opening for Boston Endeavour Academy

- Official Opening for Bourne Willoughby Academy
- Completion of new block and remodelling of existing facilities at Spilsby The Eresby School, to meet all complex needs and expansion.
- Completion of new block and remodelling of existing facilities at Louth St Bernard’s School, to meet all complex needs and expansion.
- Merger of Spalding Priory and Garth Schools to form Tulip Academy
- Completion of new block and remodelling of existing facilities at Tulip Academy – Waterside Campus, to meet all complex needs and expansion.
- Completion of new school - Lincoln St Christopher's Primary School.
- Construction commenced Lincolnshire St Christopher’s Secondary School.
- Construction commenced of rebuild at Horncastle St Lawrence School
- Self-delivery project including remodelling and new hydrotherapy pool for The Sandon School Grantham and agreement to develop a solution for site constraint at Ambergate/Sandon to include Bluecoat Meres Upper school site.
- Feasibility and design process commenced for Lincoln St Francis School and Gosberton House Academy (delayed due to procurement challenges).

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were recorded:

- The strategy when complete would create 527 new special school places across Lincolnshire schools. The Forum was assured that the strategy aspired to meet ‘all complex needs’ for Lincolnshire children. However, it was acknowledged that there would always be a small proportion of children requiring specialist intervention and a more specialist placement, for example, school for the deaf, and it was accepted to

be appropriate in these cases. It is hoped that the strategy would result in a reduction on the reliance of out of county placements.

- The £2m earmarked in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves would support the planned re-organisation of schools to increase places on a temporary basis through the policy, but thereafter the High Needs block would meet this cost, which was supported through High Needs block funding formula per place and other proxy funding.
- Despite the demands and increasing costs in this area, the strategy was considered to be more cost effective than requiring out of county placements and will support the financial sustainability of the High Needs block. The Forum were reassured that this was the most effective way to invest and manage specialist provision within the County, providing needs could continue to be met within the current arrangements. Officers were confident that costs met within the current needs block, although it was acknowledged that it was a demand-led and a watching brief would need to take place.
- Officers welcomed the DSG High Need block funding increase for 2023/24, including its share of the £2bn announced in the Chancellor autumn statement. Funding from 2024/25 hadn't been announced and that was a key component to the future financial planning. Uncertainty did lie ahead, but the authority was being proactive in its approach to manage the situation.
- The maintained Special Schools representative commended the team for their work on the project at Lincoln St Christophers school who has benefited from the strategy through the construction of a new primary school site. She also expressed gratitude for the new school and highlighted the benefits for the children.
- At this current time, additional proposals for future projects, in addition to the capital programme set out in Appendix A, had not been considered. A solid foundation had been established. Further DfE SEND capital funding would be required. Officers did acknowledge an increasing demand for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) cohort locally and the situation would continue to be monitored. The annual report – Special Educational needs due to be considered at the meeting of the Forum in June would provide further information on the position in relation to SEND provision. It was noted that the SEND Green Paper outcomes would be fundamental towards supporting sustainable High Needs blocks.
- The Forum commended the innovative transformational work undertaken in Lincolnshire as part of the strategy given the growing need for specialist provision.

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of this report and progress made in Year 4 of Implementation and any comments made be noted;
2. That the receipt of an update on Year 5 of implementation in April 2024 be agreed.

4

LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM

20 APRIL 2023

5 ACADEMIES AND TRUST UPDATE

Consideration was given to an update by the Strategic Finance Lead – Children’s Services, which provided information on the latest number of academies and pupils in academies and academy trusts, as set out in the report.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were recorded:

- The Forum was informed that maintained and academy schools were funded through the same formulas. The Forum was also informed that the Department for Education grant funding to support Local Authority school improvement ended in 2022/23, but through the Council budget and recycled de-delegation funding, locality leads support could be maintained. It was acknowledged that the number of conversion would continue to be closely monitored, but currently the number of maintained schools had remained consistent for some time, therefore risks were considered low, and the Local Authority would continue to provide support to maintained schools.
- The Forum commended Lincolnshire County Council for their dynamic approach in prioritising Lincolnshire’s young people in both maintained schools and academies.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Forum’s work programme, as set out at pages 33-34 of the agenda pack.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 1.40 pm



Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham, Executive Director - Resources

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum
Date:	29 June 2023
Subject:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum – Constitution and Membership update

Summary:

The purpose of the report is to provide the Schools' Forum with an update to Lincolnshire Schools' Forum Constitution and Membership document detailed at Appendix A.

Recommendation(s):

That the Schools' Forum is asked to note the contents of the report and endorse the updated Constitution and Membership document as detailed at Appendix A, which includes the annual review of composition membership.

Background

The Lincolnshire Schools' Forum ("the Forum") was established by virtue of Section 47A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education Act 2002. It is also required to operate under various sets of regulations resulting from those statutes, including the Schools' Forums (England) Regulations 2012 and the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations, most recently 2023.

The legislative requirements for the Forum are explained in guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency ("ESFA") titled the Schools Forum Operational and good practice guidance ("the Guidance") and a revised version of which was issued in March 2021 (included at Appendix B).

The Forum governance and operational remit are described in a constitution and Terms of Reference document ("ToR"), designed to reflect the contents of the legislation and Guidance applicable from time to time, to ensure that the Forum conducts its activities on a basis that is compliant with legislative requirements.

As a result of changes introduced by Section 35 of the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2021 and the revised version of the Guidance issued March 2021, a

review took place of the ToR, which were formally approved on the 10 September 2021 by the Executive Councillor for Children's Services.

No revision has been made to the Schools' Forums (England) Regulations 2012, and the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations (2023) reflect only the funding formula changes for the current year compared to the prior year regulations.

In summary, no changes have been made to the regulations that will change the current operating framework for the Forum. The membership composition has been reviewed and updated to reflect the current position (1 June 2023) and a forward plan of proposed membership from October 2023 of maintained and academy schools based on the January 2023 census data, which can be found in Appendix A. The school membership composition remains unchanged for 2023/24. Only two additional academy conversions have taken place in that time within the mainstream sector.

The updated ToR continue to comprise seven sections:

1. Constitution introduction indicating the statutory origins of the Forum and the regulations governing its operations.
2. Purpose and Role. A section briefly describing the overall purpose and role of the Forum.
3. The Functions of the Forum. A section and an Appendix setting out the decision-making powers of the Forum and those matters it is entitled to be consulted on as reflects current legislation and the Guidance.
4. Composition. This section explains the membership requirements and reflects the principle explained in the Guidance that non-school members may only constitute 1/3 of the Forum total membership. Also, the requirement that Membership will be reviewed annually in June to ensure it is fully representative of different school sectors and in proportion to the number of children allocated to each sector. Subsequent paragraphs then explain the membership nomination and election basis for school members (both maintained schools and academy schools) and non-school members.
5. Conduct of Meetings. This section explains the conduct of the meeting (namely, declaring of members interest, quorum, substitutions etc.), and indicates that meetings may be held by remote means.
6. Voting arrangements. Paragraphs (a) to (c) reflect requirements explained in the Guidance.
7. Administration of the Forum. Support the operations of running the Forum.

Conclusion

To ensure that the Schools' Forum operates in accordance with legislation and Guidance the Local Authority has reviewed the relevant regulations and guidance and there are no changes to report. The school membership composition has been reviewed to reflect the June 2023 maintained and academy schools' position, and the position remains unchanged for 2023/24. The ToR has been updated to reflect the annual review on the

composition of membership in Appendix A, and the Executive Councillor for Children's Services will be briefed of this position.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not applicable.

Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Revised Constitution and Membership for the Schools' Forum
Appendix B	Schools Forum Operational and good practice Guidance March 2021
Appendix C	Schools' Forum Self-Assessment Checklist

Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead, Children's Services, who can be contacted or by email at mark.popplewell@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM

CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP

1. Constitution 2023/24

1.1 Introduction

The Lincolnshire Schools Forum ("the Forum") is established by virtue of Section 47A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended. It also operates under the Schools' Forums (England) Regulations 2012 and the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023.

The Constitution will be reviewed annually at the June Forum meeting.

2. Purpose/Role of Forum

2.1 The Forum shall provide a formal channel of communication between Lincolnshire County Council (LA) and Lincolnshire schools and will serve as a mechanism for consultation on such matters concerning the funding of schools.

2.2 It will also promote working practices which seek to deliver best value in all aspects of schools funding between LA and schools and on behalf of schools.

2.3 It will work with schools to broker and provide support to achieve best value for those schools, particularly with regard to business services and procurement.

3. The functions of the Forum

3.1 The functions of the Forum are to take decisions and act as a consultative forum in accordance with legal requirements from time to time. The matters which the Forum must decide and be consulted on as set out in the Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide from March 2021 is attached at Appendix 1.

4 Composition

4.1 The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 lay out parameters within which the LA must determine the Forum's membership. Membership will be reviewed annually in June to ensure it is fully representative of different school sectors and in proportion to the number of children allocated to each sector.

4.2 All newly elected members shall receive an induction into the role and functions of the Forum. Inductions will be offered once a year, or more frequently if required.

4.3 In line with the Schools Forum: Operational and Good Practice Guide (DfE March 2021) non-school members may only constitute one third of the Schools Forum total membership.

4.4 Based on the number of pupils as of the January 2023 Census, the proposed membership from October 2023 (Academies and Trust Update 29 June 2023) from all schools is:

Sector	Pupil Numbers	Proportion	Representatives
Primary Maintained	26,462	25%	6 ¹
Secondary Maintained	2,185	2%	1 ²
Mainstream Academy	77,573	73%	12 ³
		100%	
<i>Primary Academy</i>	<i>30,349</i>	<i>39%</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Secondary Academy</i>	<i>47,224</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>7</i>
Special Academy	1,571	69%	2 ⁴
Special Maintained	690	31%	1 ⁵
Nursery Schools	258	-	1 ⁶
Alternative Provision Academy	276	-	1 ⁷
		Total	24

4 Non-school members consist of 14-19 year olds; early years; trade unions and the faith group.

4.5 The nomination and election process for maintained schools is administered by the LA in accordance with the Schools' Forum Regulations 2012 and the LA will assist in the administration of election process for academy representatives.

4.6 Nominations for maintained school representatives will be through the LA. Maintained primary and secondary school members will be elected by the relevant group and sub-group representatives.

¹ The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 4 (11): an authority may determine that the number of members representing schools in a particular school category must be broadly proportionate to the total number of schools in that category when compared with the total number of schools. Primary maintained and academy pupil number splits are 47% and 53%, however the number of maintained schools is not considered representative in the primary maintained sector. A forecast 161 primary maintained schools compared to 120 primary academy schools. Retain 6 primary maintained schools and 5 primary academy schools.

² The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 4 (7): Where the authority maintain one or more secondary schools, at least one schools member must be a representative of a secondary school.

³ Maintained school members and academy members of the forum are 24. Remaining mainstream academy members are 12, and apportioned by pupil numbers across the primary and secondary academy sectors – recommended practice. The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 4 (4): school members and Academies members must together comprise at least two thirds of the membership of the forum (28 school and non-school members).

⁴ The academy special schools representatives of the forum. 2 members identified to reflect composition of the sector.

⁵ The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 4 (8): Where the authority maintains one or more special schools, at least one schools member must be a representative of a special school.

⁶ The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 4 (9): Where the authority maintains one or more nursery schools, at least one schools member must be a representative of a nursery school.

⁷ The academy alternative provision schools representative of the forum. No maintained pupil referral units within Lincolnshire.

4.7 Based on the discussion at the Forum, it has been suggested that for primary and secondary, representation should be evenly split between head teachers and governors. In case of an odd number of representatives, the additional representative needs to be a head teacher.

Academy proprietors will need to nominate academy representatives and whilst not mandatory, the Forum recommends a balanced representation of head teachers and governors, as for maintained schools in 4.7, and that primary and secondary academies are represented in proportion to the number of pupils in each sector, to ensure representation from both phases as appropriate.

Election of Academy members will need to be by way of a transparent voting process. The LA will ensure this where it administers the election. Where the proprietors administer the election they will need to ensure such a process is in place.

Where there is only one mainstream Academy, one special Academy or one alternative provision Academy in the LA's area, the proprietor of that Academy must select the person who will represent it on the Forum.

If for any reason, an election for an academies representative does not take place by any date (if any) set by the LA or any such election results in a tie between two or more candidates, the LA must appoint the academies representative to the Forum instead.

4.8 The **schools membership** should include representation from the following sectors:

- Special Schools (as of 2020/21 to include representation of special academies).
- Nursery Schools
- Pupil Referral Unit

4.9 **Non-school members** are represented by at least one member from each of the following sectors:

- the Faith groups to be an agreed nominee from the local Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist dioceses;
- other faith groups (if any) other than the above where there are schools or academies in the LA area designated under s 69(3) of the 1998 Act as having a religious character;
- the staff Trades Unions to be an agreed nominee from the recognised teacher and head teacher Unions and UNISON;
- institution (other than from a school or academy) providing education to 14-19 year olds;
- private, voluntary and independent early years providers of the free entitlement to early years education;

(The Executive Councillor with responsibility for education is invited to meetings as an observer with speaking rights but has no voting rights).

4.10 Election, appointment and eligibility of school members (Regulation 4A)

(a) Groups (maintained Schools Members)

Where a vacancy for a maintained Schools Member arises, the LA shall appoint a replacement elected by the members of the relevant group, or sub group.

The groups are:–

- (a) a representative of a maintained nursery school
- (b) Primary Head Teachers
- (c) Primary Governors
- (c) Secondary Head Teachers
- (d) Secondary Governors
- (d) representatives of a maintained Special school

In the case of the groups one nominee per school must be seconded by two people from the same group (e.g. a Primary head teacher must be seconded by two Primary head teachers and a Primary Governor must be seconded by two Primary Governors).

(b) Non-Schools Members

Nominations to be sought for such members from the relevant bodies. The LA must inform the governing bodies of schools maintained by them or Academies within the respective area, of the name of the Non-School member and the name of the body that member represents, within one month.

If for any reason, an election for a person to represent 16 – 19 providers either does not take place by any date (if any) set by the LA or any such election results in a tie between two or more candidates, the authority must appoint the person to represent 16 – 19 providers to the Forum instead.

(c) General

In the case of the Groups (maintained School Members only) one vote per school will be permitted.

No person who is an Executive Councillor or a relevant officer of the LA shall be appointed as either a Schools' Member or as a Non-Schools' Member but that the Executive Councillor(s) for education shall be invited to attend meetings of the Forum as an observer with speaking rights because of their knowledge of education matters but no voting rights.

Any elected Councillor or officer of the LA, who is not a member of the Forum, may attend meetings of the Forum, and shall be entitled to speak at such meetings.

A Schools' Member (maintained and academy) shall remain in office until:-

- (1) they cease to hold the office by virtue of which they became eligible for appointment to the Forum;
- (2) their term of office as a Schools' Member comes to an end (period of office is for 4 years; and
- (3) they resign from office as a Schools' Member.

There are no restrictions on the number of terms a member can serve.

A Non-Schools' Member shall remain in office until he resigns his office, or until the LA makes a further appointment to replace him on nomination from the relevant body. A written record of the composition of the Forum will be maintained by the LA, such record to include the number of Schools' Members, (maintained and Academy) and non-Schools' Members; any principles determined by the LA for the appointment of Schools' Members and any determination by the LA to seek nominations for non-Schools' Members.

5. Conduct of Meetings

- (a) Meetings of the Forum are to be held in public and which may (whilst governing legislation and regulations continue to permit) include meetings held by remote means.
- (b) Members must declare an interest where relevant.
- (c) The quorum for meetings is 40% (excluding vacancies).
- (d) Each member on the forum may appoint 1 named substitute member to the Forum, to act for the term of the permanent member. Proposed appointments are to be made in writing to the Clerk to the Forum by no later than 30 September every four years following the election of members. Where it is proposed to change that substitution in mid-year then the name of the proposed replacement substitute must be received by the Clerk to the Forum in writing not less than 1 calendar month before the date of the meeting at which it is proposed the revised substitution should take place. Substitutes (or replacement substitutes) will only be able to sit as members of the Forum where:-
 - Formal written notice of the attendance of the named substitute / replacement substitute has been given to the Clerk to the Forum by 5pm on the working day before the date of the relevant Forum meeting at which the substitution is to take place.
 - The permanent member is absent for the whole of the duration of the relevant

meeting.

- Members who act as substitutes have the same rights as the permanent member in terms of receiving papers and speaking and voting at the meeting.
- (e) The posts of Chairman and Vice Chairmen will be elected annually by the Forum. They may not be persons who are elected members or officers of the LA.
- (f) Decisions of the Forum will be on a straight majority vote of its members present and entitled to vote. In the event of an equality of votes the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

6. Voting arrangements are as follows:

(a) Maintained School Members

- Only Primary representatives can vote on primary school de-delegation.
- Only secondary representatives can vote on secondary school de-delegation.
- All schools members can vote on the scheme for financing schools.
- All schools members can vote on any other Schools Forum business, including the consultation on the funding formula.

(b) Academy Members

- Cannot vote on de-delegation or the scheme for financing schools.
- All academies members can vote on any other Schools Forum business, including the consultation on the funding formula.

(c) Non-school Members

- No Non-School Member can vote on de-delegation or the scheme for financing schools.
- No Non-School member other than PVI representatives can vote on the consultation on the funding formula.
- All non-school members can vote on any other Schools Forum business.

(d) The Chairman will regulate and control proceedings for the meeting.

(e) Speeches must be directed to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation, point of order or information.

(f) Every proposition shall be determined by the Chairman by a show of hands.

(h) There shall be a minimum of four meetings a year.

(i) The Forum can grant non-voting observer status to organisations. Observers can participate in discussions.

(j) The Forum can establish working groups of its members and can co-opt/appoint people/individuals for/to a working group, which need not be held in public.

(k) Procedures relating to the chairing of meetings of the Forum will in general follow the rules in the constitution of the County Council. The chair of the Forum must decide on an agenda for the meeting of the Forum following consultation with members of the Forum.

(l) The proceedings of the Forum shall not be invalidated by:-

- any vacancy among their number;
- any defect in the election or appointment of any member; or
- any defect in the appointment of Chairman.

(m) Any individual member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Forum shall resign unless the member has a legitimate reason for non-attendance e.g. ill health, illness of family member, etc. Before any resignation takes place a report will be submitted to the Forum outlining the reason(s) for non-attendance.

7. Administration of the Forum

(a) Clerking of meetings of the Forum will be carried out by the LA.

(b) Expenses payable to members of the Forum and co-opted/appointed representatives made by the Forum will be mileage, subsistence, childcare and dependents' costs in accordance with the current scheme of Members' Allowances operated by the LA, loss of earnings incurred by an individual during their work time and supply cover.

(c) Costs incurred by the Forum, which include direct servicing costs, member's expenses, apportioned overheads and any commissioned work will be charged to the Schools' Budget.

(d) Meetings to be held at least 4 times per year in public at time to be agreed by the Chairman at the County Offices, Lincoln, unless the Forum decides otherwise.

(e) The LA must promptly publish all papers considered by the Forum and the minutes of their meetings on the LA's website.

(f) Members to comply with the LA's adopted Code of Member conduct and must declare at the meeting and not participate where they have a connection with any matter under discussion which would (were they a member of the LA) otherwise amount to a disclosable pecuniary interests as defined by the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

(as at June 2023)

APPENDIX 1

Schools forum powers

1. Schools' Forums generally have a consultative role. However, there are situations in which they have decision making powers. The overarching areas on which Schools' Forums make decisions on Local Authority proposals are:
 - de-delegation from mainstream maintained schools budgets (separate approval will be required by the primary and secondary phase members of schools forum), for prescribed services to be provided centrally
 - to create a fund for significant pupil growth in order to support the local authority's duty for place planning (basic need), including pre-opening and diseconomy of scale costs, and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
 - to create a fund for falling rolls for good or outstanding schools if the schools' surplus capacity is likely to be needed within the next three years to meet rising pupil numbers and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
 - agreeing other centrally retained budgets, including for Local Authority statutory responsibilities (where these relate to maintained schools only, voting is by the primary, secondary, special and PRU members of schools forum)
 - funding for central early years expenditure, which may include funding for checking eligibility of pupils for an early years place, the early years pupil premium and/or free school meals
 - authorising a reduction in the schools budget in order to fund a deficit arising in central expenditure, or from de-delegated services, which is to be carried forward from a previous funding period. In the 2018 to 2019 funding year the Schools block is ring-fenced. Local Authorities require Schools' Forum approval in order to move up to 0.5% from the Schools block to other blocks
 - in each of these cases, the Local Authority can appeal to the Secretary of State if the Schools' Forum rejects its proposal.
2. Regulations state that the Local Authority must consult the Schools' Forum annually in connection with various schools budget functions, namely:
 - amendments to the school funding formula, for which the voting is restricted by the exclusion of non-schools members except for PVI representatives

- arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs in particular the places to be commissioned by the Local Authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
 - arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the Local Authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
 - arrangements for early years provision
 - administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the Local Authority
3. Consultation must also take place when a Local Authority is proposing a contract for supplies and services which is to be funded from the Schools Budget and is in excess of the EU procurement thresholds. The consultation must cover the terms of the contract at least one month prior to the issue of invitations to tender.
4. The Schools' Forum has the responsibility of informing the governing bodies of all schools maintained by the Local Authority of the results of any consultations carried out by the Local Authority relating to the issues in paragraphs 1 and 2.
5. Local Authorities will need to discuss with the Schools' Forum any proposals that they intend to put to the Secretary of State to:
- vary the MFG
 - use exceptional factors
 - vary pupil numbers (Secretary of State approval is no longer required for increases relating to changes in admission limits or reorganisations)
 - allow additional categories of, or spending on, central budgets
 - amend the sparsity factor
 - vary the lump sum for amalgamating schools
 - vary the protection for special schools and special academies
 - move up to 0.5% from the schools block, where the schools forum do not agree, or move more than 0.5% from the schools block

Proposals will then need to be considered by the Secretary of State.

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Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Schools Forum

Operational and good practice guide

March 2021

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Introduction

1. This guide is designed to provide local authority officers and schools forum elected members with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of schools forums.
2. It is organised in two sections:
 - section 1 provides information on the constitutional and organisational requirements for schools forums
 - section 2 covers a number of key aspects of the operation of schools forums at local level, drawing on good practice from a number of schools forums
3. GOV.UK contains details of all the announcements, documents and other information relating to school funding and schools forums, including the National funding formula (NFF) The website also has a range of useful links to other sites that may be of relevance to schools forum members.
4. A short [guide to the schools forum for schools and academies](#), which may be helpful to stakeholders and the wider school family, is available on GOV.UK.
5. If you have any queries about the operation of schools forums please contact Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) using the [ESFA enquiry form](#).

Section 1 – schools forum regulations: constitution and procedural issues

Regulations

6. [National regulations](#)¹ govern the composition, constitution and procedures of schools forums. Local authorities can provide schools forum members with a copy of these regulations or alternatively they can be accessed at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2261/contents>.

7. The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2021 amended The Schools Forums (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 to make permanent provisions to enable schools forums meetings to be held remotely. This includes (but is not limited to) telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming. Where a schools forum decides to hold a public meeting by remote means only, the forum should provide support or make alternative arrangements so that any interested parties who do not have telephone or online access can attend virtual meetings.

Schools forum powers

8. Schools forums generally have a consultative role. However, there are situations in which they have decision making powers. The respective roles of schools forums, local authorities and the DfE are summarised in [schools forum powers and responsibilities](#). The overarching areas on which schools forums make decisions on local authority proposals are:

- de-delegation from mainstream maintained schools budgets (separate approval will be required by the primary and secondary phase members of schools forum), for prescribed services to be provided centrally
- to create a fund for significant pupil growth in order to support the local authority's duty for place planning (basic need), including pre-opening and diseconomy of scale costs, and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
- to create a fund for falling rolls for good or outstanding schools if the schools' surplus capacity is likely to be needed within the next three years to meet rising pupil numbers and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund

¹ Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/2261) (as amended)

- agreeing other centrally retained budgets, including for local authority statutory responsibilities (where these relate to maintained schools only, voting is by the primary, secondary, special and PRU members of schools forum)
- funding for central early years expenditure, which may include funding for checking eligibility of pupils for an early years place, the early years pupil premium and/or free school meals
- authorising a reduction in the schools budget in order to fund a deficit arising in central expenditure, or from de-delegated services, which is to be carried forward from a previous funding period in the 2018 to 2019 funding year the schools block is ring-fenced. Local authorities require schools forum approval in order to move up to 0.5% from the schools block to other blocks
- in each of these cases, the local authority can appeal to the Secretary of State if the schools forum rejects its proposal.

9. Local authorities should be aware that the provisions of the [Local Government Act 2000](#) restrict the delegation of local authority decisions to Cabinet, a member of Cabinet, a Committee of Cabinet or an officer of the Council, which would not include schools forums. As a result the local authority cannot delegate its decision making powers to schools forum, for example, decisions on the funding formula.

10. Regulations state that the local authority must consult the schools forum annually in connection with various schools budget functions, namely:

- amendments to the school funding formula, for which the voting is restricted by the exclusion of non-schools members except for PVI representatives
- arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs in particular the places to be commissioned by the local authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the local authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for early years provision
- administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the local authority
- There's no specific definition of these consultation requirements over and above the wording in the regulations. It's a matter for the local authority to decide on the appropriate level of detail it needs to generate a sufficiently informed response from schools forum.

11. Consultation must also take place when a local authority is proposing a contract for supplies and services which is to be funded from the Schools Budget and is in excess of the EU procurement thresholds. The consultation must cover the terms of the contract at least one month prior to the issue of invitations to tender.

12. The schools forum has the responsibility of informing the governing bodies of all schools maintained by the local authority of the results of any consultations carried out by the local authority relating to the issues in paragraphs 12 and 13 above.

13. Local authorities will need to discuss with the schools forum any proposals that they intend to put to the Secretary of State to:

- vary the MFG
- use exceptional factors
- vary pupil numbers (Secretary of State approval is no longer required for increases relating to changes in admission limits or reorganisations)
- allow additional categories of, or spending on, central budgets
- amend the sparsity factor
- vary the lump sum for amalgamating schools
- vary the protection for special schools and special academies
- move up to 0.5% from the schools block, where the schools forum do not agree, or move more than 0.5% from the schools block

Proposals will then need to be considered by the Secretary of State.

Membership

14. The Schools Forums Regulations provide a framework for the appointment of members, but allow a considerable degree of discretion in order to accommodate local priorities and practice. A quick guide to the [structure of the schools forums](#) is available.

15. There is no maximum or minimum size of a schools forum. Authorities will wish to take various issues into account in deciding the actual size, including the need to have full representation for various types of school, and the local authority's policy on representation of non-schools members. However, care should be taken to keep the schools forum to a reasonable size to ensure that it does not become too unwieldy.

16. Types of member: schools forums must have 'schools members', 'academies member(s)' if there is at least one academy in the local authority's area and 'non-schools members'. Schools and academies members together must number at least two-thirds of the total membership of the schools forum and the balance between maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies members must be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category, so the structure of Forum should be regularly reviewed, we would suggest good practice is to review the membership as a standing agenda item at each meeting. Academies members must represent mainstream academies and, if there are any in the local authority area, special academies and alternative provision academies. There is no requirement for academies members to represent specific primary and secondary phases, but it may be encouraged to ensure representation remains broadly proportionate to pupil numbers. Academy members must be separately elected and designated from maintained school representatives, please see paragraph 28.

17. Schools forum members will need the skills and competencies to manage Forum business (as detailed in [school forum powers and responsibilities](#)) and to take a strategic view across the whole education estate whilst acting as representative of the group that has elected them. Furthermore, they should be easily contactable and pro-active in raising the profile of issues and communicating decisions, and the reasons behind them, effectively. Good practice for schools forums would be to offer training to new or existing members who may benefit from this.

Term of office

18. The term of office for each schools member and academies member should be stipulated by the local authority at the time of appointment. Such stipulation should follow published rules and be applied in a consistent manner between members. They need not have identical terms – there may be a case for varied terms so that there is continuity of experience rather than there being a complete change in the membership at a single point. The term of office should not be of a length that would hinder the requirement for the structure of the schools forum to mirror the type of provision in light of the pace of academy conversions. Examples of how this may work include:

- holding vacancies until the schools forum structure is reviewed providing that this does not mean holding vacancies for an unreasonable length of time, for example, we would expect this vacancy to be filled for the following term
- increasing the size of the schools forum temporarily to appoint additional academy members, then deleting schools member posts at the end of a term of office or when a vacancy arises
- considering continuity of service; where an academy conversion affects the school of a current schools member, would academies consider appointing that person as an academies member

19. The length of term of office for non-schools members is at the discretion of the local authority. Schools and academies must be informed, within a month of the appointment of any non-schools member, of the name of the member and the name of the body that that member represents.

20. As well as the term of office coming to an end, a member ceases to be a member of the Schools Forum if he or she resigns from the schools forum or no longer occupies the office by which he or she became eligible for election, selection or appointment to the schools forum. For example;

- a secondary schools member must stand down if their school converts to an academy
- a schools member representing community primary school governors who is no longer a governor of a community primary school in the relevant local authority must cease to hold office on the schools forum even if they remain a governor of a school represented by another group or sub-group
- other situations in which membership of the schools forum ends are if a member gives notice in writing to the local authority and, in the case of a non-schools member, the member is replaced by the local authority, for example at the request of the body which the member represents

Schools members

21. Schools members represent specified phases or types of maintained schools within the local authority. As a minimum, schools forums must contain representatives of two groups of schools: primary and secondary schools, unless there are no primary or secondary schools maintained by the local authority. Middle schools and all through schools are treated according to their deemed status.

22. Where a local authority maintains one or more special schools the schools forum must have at least one schools member from that sector. The same applies to nursery schools and pupil referral units (PRUs).

23. The local authority then has discretion to divide the groups referred to in paragraph 16 and 17 into one or more of the following sub-groups:

- headteachers or headteachers' representatives in each group
- governors in each group
- headteachers or headteachers representatives and governors in each group
- representatives of a particular school category, for example, voluntary aided

24. Headteachers can be represented by other senior members of staff within their school. Governors can include interim executive members of an interim executive board. The sub-groups do not have to be of equal size; for example, there

may be more representatives of headteachers of primary schools than governors of such schools, or vice versa. The membership structure of the schools forum should ensure there is sufficient representation of each type of schools member in each group to ensure that debate within the schools forum is balanced and representative. As a minimum, there must be at least one representative of headteachers and one representative of governors among the schools members.

25. Whatever the membership structure of schools members on a schools forum, the important issue is that it should reflect most effectively the profile of education provision across the local authority to ensure that there is not an in-built bias towards any one phase or group.

Election and nomination of schools members

26. The relevant group or sub-group is probably best placed to determine how their schools members should be elected.

27. It's good practice for those who draw up the scheme to ensure that a vacancy amongst a represented group would be filled by a nominee elected according to a process that has been determined by all those represented in that group, for example, community primary school headteachers, or secondary school governors, ensuring that everyone represented has had the opportunity to stand for election and/or vote in such an election. The process must be restricted to the group in question; a headteachers phase group could only vote as a whole for headteacher members if the voting excluded academies, as academies members form a separate group.

28. It's not appropriate for a single person to be elected to represent more than one group or sub-group concurrently, for instance, if they were a governor at a primary and secondary school. They can stand for election from either group but can be appointed to represent only one of those groups.

29. The purpose of ensuring that each group or sub-group is responsible for their election process is to guarantee that there is a transparent and representative process by which members of schools forums are nominated to represent their constituents.

30. Appropriate support to each group or sub-group to manage their election processes should be offered by the clerk of a schools forum, or the committee/democratic services of a local authority. This may just include the provision of advice but may also consist of providing administrative support in actually running the elections themselves.

31. As a minimum, we would recommend that the clerk of a schools forum make a record of the process by which the relevant schools within each group and sub-group elect their nominees to the schools forum and be able to advise the Chair

of the schools forum and local authority on action that needs to be taken, where necessary, to seek new nominees.

32. In determining the process by which elections should be operated it is perfectly legitimate for a local authority to devise, in consultation with their schools forum, a model scheme for the relevant schools within a group or sub-group to consider and be invited to adopt. However, such a model scheme cannot be imposed on that body of schools: adaptations and/or alternative schemes may be adopted. A single scheme need not be adopted universally.

33. Care should be taken to ensure that every eligible member of a group or sub-group has an opportunity to be involved in the determination of their group's election process, is given the opportunity to stand for election if they choose to do so, and is involved in the election of their representative(s).

34. It would not be compliant with the regulations for the steering committee or Chair of a 'parent' group simply to make a nomination to represent their group or sub-group on a schools forum. Schools members must be elected, subject to paragraph 39 below.

35. The local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint the schools member if the election has not taken place by that date. The person appointed should be a member of the relevant group.

36. We would recommend that any scheme takes into account a number of factors:

- the process for collecting names of those wishing to stand for election
- the timescale for notifying all constituents of the election and those standing
- the arrangements for dispatching and receiving ballots
- the arrangements for counting and publicising the results
- any arrangements for unusual circumstances such as only one candidate standing in an election
- whether existing members can stand for re-election

37. In the event of a tie between two or more candidates, then the local authority must appoint the schools member instead. The local authority may decide to appoint someone else rather than one of the candidates and might wish to take into account the experience or expertise of the individuals, and the balance between the different types of school represented on the schools forum.

Election and nomination of academies members

38. Academies members must be elected by the proprietor bodies of the academies in the local authority's area, and they are probably best placed to determine the process. Academies members are there to represent the proprietor bodies of academies and are, therefore, not necessarily restricted to principals, senior staff or governors. The same factors should be taken into account as for the election of schools members, set out in paragraphs 28 to 39. For the avoidance of doubt, Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools are classed as academies for this purpose. There is no distinction between sponsored and converter academies.

39. There are three sub-groups for academy members: mainstream academies, special academies and alternative provision academies and it is for the proprietors of academies within each of these sub-groups to elect their representatives. It is not appropriate, therefore, for headteacher phase groups to determine representation unless the academy proprietors have agreed and even then the voting would need to exclude maintained school representatives. There is no requirement for academies members to be split into primary and secondary sub-groups. However, local authorities may wish to encourage academies to consider the pupil proportions across all academies when electing their representatives.

40. Where there is only one academy in a sub-group in the local authority's area, then their proprietor body must select the person who will represent them.

41. It is possible that a single person be appointed as an academies member to more than one schools forum, for example if an academy chain is located across multiple local authorities, providing they are elected on each occasion in accordance with the agreed election process for each separate schools forum.

42. As with schools members, the local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint an academies member if the election does not take place by that date, or if an election results in a tie between two or more candidates.

Non-schools members

43. Non-schools members may number no more than a third of a schools forum's total membership (excluding observers, see paragraph 58). A representative of providers of 16-19 education must be elected from those providers. This includes those in the FE sector (FE and sixth form colleges) and other post-school institutions that specialise in special education needs (SPNs), where 20% or more of their students reside in the local authority's area. As with academies the providers are probably best placed to determine the election process.

44. The local authority must appoint at least one person to represent early years providers from the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. Early years

PVI settings need to be represented because funding for the free entitlement for three and four year olds and eligible two year olds comes from the Dedicated Schools Grant, and all settings are funded through the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF).

45. Before appointing additional non-schools members to the schools forum, the local authority must consider whether the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses situated in the local authority's area; and, where there are schools or academies in the area with a different religious character, the appropriate faith group, should be represented on the schools forum. If diocesan authorities nominate members for appointment as non-schools members they may wish to consider what type of representative would be most appropriate, schools-based such as a headteacher or governor, or someone linked more generally with the diocese, for example a member of the education board.

46. It's also good practice for local authorities to ensure that the needs and interests of all the pupils in the local authority are adequately represented by the members of a schools forum. The interests of pupils in maintained schools can be represented by schools members. Some pupils in a local authority, however, are not in maintained schools but instead are educated in hospitals, independent special schools and non-maintained special schools. Certain types of non-schools members can play an important role in representing the interests of these groups of pupils. They can also play a role in representing the interests and views of the services that support those groups of vulnerable and at risk pupils who nevertheless are on the roll of maintained schools, such as looked after children and children with special educational needs.

47. The purpose of non-schools members is also to bring greater breadth of discussion to schools forum meetings and ensure that stakeholders and partners other than schools are represented. Organisations which typically provide non-schools members are trades unions, professional associations and representatives of youth groups. Parent groups could also be considered. However, as there are clearly limited numbers of non-schools members able to be on a schools forum, care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate representation from wider stakeholders is achieved.

Other membership issues

48. There are three restrictions placed on who can be a non-schools member of a schools forum. The local authority cannot appoint:

- an elected member of the local authority who is appointed to the executive of that local authority (a lead member/portfolio holder) ('executive members')
- the Director of Children's Services or any officer employed or engaged to work under the management of the Director of Children's Services, and who does not

directly provide education to children (or manage those who do) ('relevant officer' (a) and (b))

- other officers with a specific role in management of and/or who advise on funding for schools ('relevant officer' part (c))

49. Schools forums have the power to approve a limited range of proposals from their local authority: the restrictions ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the proposing body (the local authority) and the approving body (the schools forum).

50. However, non-executive elected members and those officers who are employed in their capacity as headteachers or teachers and those who directly manage a service which provides education to individual children and/or advice to schools on, for example, learning and behavioural matters are eligible to be members of schools forums.

51. In the case of non-executive elected members, they may be a schools member (by virtue of them being a school governor), an academies member or a non-schools member. As a non-schools member they may be well placed to fulfil the broader overview and scrutiny role they have within the local authority in general.

52. However, the inclusion of non-executive elected members and certain officers is not a requirement. Many schools forums do not have such members on them and it is for each local authority and schools forum to consider how best to ensure the right balance of school and non-school representation on the schools forum, taking into account their local circumstances and preferences.

The role of executive elected members

53. A schools forum needs to ensure that there are systems in place for executive members of the Council to be aware of its views on specific issues and, in particular, any decisions it takes in relation to the Schools Budget and individual budget shares.

54. Executive members with responsibility for education/children's services or resources of the local authority are able to participate in schools forum meetings. By doing so such elected members are able to contribute to the discussion and receive first-hand the views of the schools forum: it is clearly good practice for this to be the case and the regulations provide the right for executive members to attend and speak at schools forum meetings. However, there is no requirement for this to happen so at the very least there should be clear channels of communication between the schools forum and executive members. Communication may also be assisted if schools forum members attended relevant Cabinet meetings as members of the public, for example, when the funding formula is decided.

Recording the composition of schools forums

55. Each local authority must make a written record of the composition of its schools forum detailing the numbers of schools members and by which group or sub-group they were elected, the number of academies members and the number of non-schools members, their terms of office, how they were chosen and whom they represent. This record should also indicate the term of office for schools and academies members. It would be helpful if this were published on the schools forum website so schools and wider stakeholders can easily find who their representatives are.

Observers

56. The Regulations provide that the Secretary of State can appoint an observer to attend and speak at schools forum meetings, for example a representative from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This allows a conduit for national policy to be discussed at a local level and provide access for schools forum to an additional support mechanism, for example, where there are highly complex issues to resolve.

Participation of local authority officers at meetings

57. Only specific officers can speak at meetings of the schools forum. These officers are:

- Director of Children's Services or their representative
- Chief Financial Officer or their representative
- any person invited by the schools forum to provide financial or technical advice
- any person presenting a paper to the schools forum but their ability to speak is limited to the paper that they are presenting

58. In the majority of cases schools forums are supported by a specific officer. In the course of their work, however, schools forums will be required to consider a whole range of issues and they may consider it appropriate that other officers attend for specific items of business. Where this is the case, the local authority should meet the schools forum's requests as far as possible. It is best practice to record attendance at meetings as well as membership to ensure elected members are attending and contributing to discussions.

Procedures

59. Many procedural matters are not prescribed in the regulations and are at the discretion either of the local authority or the schools forum itself. However, there are requirements in the regulations relating to:

- **Quorum:** A meeting is only quorate if 40% of the total membership is present (this excludes any observers, and it is 40% of the current membership excluding vacancies). If a meeting is inquorate it can proceed but it cannot legally take decisions (election of a Chair, or a decision relating to funding conferred by the funding regulations). An inquorate meeting can respond to local authority consultation, and give views to the local authority. It would normally be good practice for the local authority to take account of such 'unofficial' views, but it's not legally obliged to do so. In practice, the arrangements for meetings should be made to reduce the chance of a problem with the quorum. The quorum stipulation is in the regulations to help ensure the legitimacy of decisions
- **Election of a Chair:** Under the Regulations, if the position of Chair falls vacant the schools forum must decide how long the term of office of the next Chair will be. This can be for any period, but the schools forum should consider carefully whether a period exceeding two years is sensible. A long period will also cause problems if the member elected as Chair has a term of office as a member which comes to an end before their term of office as Chair ends. The schools forum must elect a Chair from amongst its own members, so it is not possible to elect an independent Chair. In addition any elected member of the local authority or officer of the local authority who is a member of a schools forum may not hold the office of Chair. Schools forums can also appoint to a position of vice Chair to provide cover if the Chair is absent or the post vacant
- **Voting procedures:** The Regulations provide that a schools forum may determine its own voting procedures save that voting on:
 - the funding formula is limited to schools members, academies members and PVI representatives
 - de-delegation is limited to the specific primary and secondary phase of maintained schools members
 - retaining funding for statutory duties relating to maintained schools only is limited to maintained primary, secondary, special and PRU members
- **The powers which schools forums:** have to take decisions on a range of funding matters increase the importance of clear procedures, for example, decisions are made on a simple majority or the threshold to be met if higher. These procedures should take account of any use of working groups by the schools forum, for example a decision might be taken by voting to accept and adopt a report by a working group (see paragraph 65). As part of any voting

procedure there should be clarity in the procedures for recording the outcome of a vote, and any resolutions a schools forum makes in relation to any vote taken

- **Substitutes:** the local authority must make arrangements to enable substitutes to attend and vote (where appropriate) at schools forum meetings. This applies to schools members, academies members and non-schools members. The arrangements must be decided in consultation with schools forum members
- **Defects and vacancies:** The Regulations provide that proceedings of the schools forum are not invalidated by defects in the election or appointment of any member, or the appointment of the Chair. Nor does the existence of any vacancy on the schools forum invalidate proceedings (see paragraph 61 on quorum)
- **Timing:** schools forums must meet at least four times a year
- **Meeting:** schools forums can meet remotely. This includes (but is not limited to) telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming.

60. Where the regulations make no provision on a procedural matter, local discretion should be exercised. It is for the local authority to decide how far it wishes to establish rules for the schools forum to follow, in the form of standing orders. While it is entitled to do so, it is of course good practice to allow the schools forum to set its own rules so far as possible.

Public access

61. Schools forums are more than just consultative bodies. They also have an important role to play in approving certain proposals from their local authority and are therefore involved in the decision making process surrounding the use of public money at local level. As a result schools forums are required to be open to the public. Furthermore papers, agendas and minutes must be publicly available well in advance of each meeting. It's good practice that notification that the schools forum is a public meeting is included on the website and papers are published at least a week in advance. Local authorities should ensure that the websites are accessible and easy to find.

62. Some schools forums already operate very much along the lines of a local authority committee. This is perfectly legitimate and will provide a consistent framework for the running of meetings that are open to the public, and the publishing of papers and agendas well in advance of the meeting and minutes published promptly as required under Regulation 8(13) of the Schools Forum Regulations 2012.

63. Local authorities should ensure that their schools forum clerk's contact details are published on their website and that it is clear to interested parties how they can attend the meeting remotely.

Working groups

64. It's open to a schools forum to set up working groups of members to discuss specific issues, and to produce draft advice and decisions for the schools forum itself to consider. The groups can also include wider representation, for example, an early years reference group can represent all the different types of provider to consider the detail of the early years single funding formula. The reference group would then be able to give its considered view on the local authority's proposals to the schools forum. The schools forum should not delegate actual decisions or the finalisation of advice to a working group, as this may have the effect of excluding legitimate points of view. These have proved effective for larger local authorities; examples of some working groups are for high needs and early years.

Urgent business

65. It's good practice for the local authority to agree with its schools forum an urgency procedure to be followed when there is a genuine business need for a decision or formal view to be expressed by the schools forum, before the next scheduled meeting. The local authority may of course call an unscheduled meeting; but it may also wish to put in place alternative arrangements such as clearance by email correspondence or some other means. Such instances should be avoided so far as possible but are legitimate provided all members of the schools forum have an opportunity to participate, the logistics provide a reasonable opportunity for consideration and the local authority policy on data security is not compromised.

66. It's not legal for the Chair to take a decision on behalf of the schools forum, no matter how urgent the matter in question; but a schools forum may wish to put in place a procedure for the Chair to give the local authority a view on an urgent issue.

Resources of the schools forum

67. The costs of a schools forum fall in the Central School Services Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

68. It's legitimate to charge the running costs of schools forums to this budget including any agreed and reasonable expenses for members attending meetings, the costs of producing and distributing papers and costs room hire and refreshments and for clerking of meetings. Beyond these costs some schools forums have a budget of their own to use for activities such as commissioning research or other reports.

Section 2 – effective schools forums

Introduction

69. As the previous section outlined, local authorities have responsibility for establishing schools forums. They also have an ongoing responsibility to provide them with appropriate support, information and guidance in carrying out their functions and responsibilities.

70. The following outlines some aspects of what local authorities and schools forums should consider in ensuring that their schools forums are as effective as possible. The pace of academy conversions in particular means that this significant sector must be properly represented and feel that it is able to play a meaningful part in the discussions of the schools forum.

71. Central to the effectiveness or otherwise of a schools forum will be the relationship between it and its local authority. The local authority will have a significant influence on this: the support it provides; the resources it devotes and the weight it gives to the views of schools forums all contribute to the nature of the relationship. There are therefore a number of characteristics of this relationship that are particularly important:

- partnership: having a shared understanding of the priorities, issues and concerns of schools, academies and the local authority
- effective support: the business of the schools forum is supported by the local authority in an efficient and professional manner
- openness: it's important that a schools forum feels it is receiving open, honest and objective advice from its local authority
- responsiveness: local authorities should as far as possible be responsive to requests from their schools forums and their members. Schools forums themselves should also be aware of the resource implications of their requests
- strategic view: members of schools forum should consider the needs of the whole of the educational community, rather than using their position on a schools forum to advance their own sectional or specific interests
- challenge and scrutiny: schools forums may be asked to agree to proposals from their local authority that will have an effect on all schools and academies in the local area. The extent to which schools forums can scrutinise and challenge such proposals is an important aspect of their effectiveness

72. The characteristics identified above are just some of the aspects that will contribute to an effective schools forum. The following provides more detail on some of the specific issues that local authorities and schools forums may wish to consider in thinking about their own arrangements.

Induction of new members

73. When new members join the schools forum appropriate induction materials should be provided. These might include material relating to the operation of the schools forum together with background information about the local and national school funding arrangements. Typically they might comprise:

- the constitution of the schools forum
- a list of members including contact details and their terms of office
- any locally agreed terms of reference explaining the relationship between the schools forum and the local authority
- copies of minutes of previous meetings
- the programme of schools forum meetings for the year
- the local schools forum web address

74. This Operational and Good Practice Guide, suitably supplemented by local material, should also be provided to new members on their appointment.

75. Where there is sufficient turnover of schools forum members in any particular year the local authority may wish to organise a one-off induction event to brief new members. Such an event would usefully include an outline of the role of the schools forum and the national funding arrangements for schools and local authorities. It might also include an explanation of the local funding formula and any proposals for review. The opportunity could also be taken to explain the main reporting requirements for school and local authority expenditure.

Training

76. Ideally schools forum members should be able to use some of the budget set aside for schools forum running costs for accessing relevant training activities. Some training will be provided by officers of the local authority but members may wish to attend national or regional events, the costs of which, where necessary, can be supported from the schools forum budget. Local and national bodies have a key role to play in developing the competencies of forum members.

77. Training will need to be provided in response to any changes in the role of the schools forum and national developments in respect of school funding, to ensure that members can be fully effective when detailed discussions are taking place.

Agenda setting

78. The process by which the agenda for a meeting or cycle of meetings is set is in many respects one of the key determinants of the effectiveness or otherwise of a schools forum.

79. The frequency and timing of meetings of the schools forum should be agreed in advance of each financial or academic year; these should take into consideration deadlines for the local authority such as disapplication requests and the submission of the authority proforma tool (APT). It's good practice to publish the dates of meetings on the schools forum website. In drawing up this cycle of meetings, in consultation with the schools forum, the local authority should provide a clear overview of the key consultative and decision-making points in the school funding cycle. These will be drawn from a combination of national and local information and should inform the basic agenda items that each meeting needs to cover. For instance meetings will need to be scheduled at appropriate points to enable the schools forum to consider the outcomes of local consultations and national announcements.

80. Although the business of schools forums must be open and transparent, it is recognised that from time to time items of a confidential nature will need to be discussed. It's recommended that authorities apply the same principles that they apply to Council or Cabinet meetings when judging an item to be confidential and adopt similar practices for dealing with those reports in the meeting, for example placing them together at the end of the agenda.

Preparation for a schools forum meeting

81. It's vital that the schools forum is transparent, open and has clear communication lines to all of the members that are represented. This ensures the wider school family are aware of the business discussed, the impact on their setting and the reasons for the decisions.

82. The vast majority of a schools forum's business will be transacted on the basis of prepared papers. It is therefore important that these are concise, informative and produced in a timely and consistent manner. Recommendations should be clearly set out at the beginning of each report. It's also helpful if the front of the report confirms whether the report is for information or decision and who is eligible to vote where relevant.

83. It's good practice for the schools forum and local authority to agree a standard for papers. It is usual for papers to be dispatched at least one week prior to the meeting at which they will be discussed to allow members to consider them and if necessary canvass views from the group they are representing. Papers should be published on the local authority's website at this time to enable representations to be made to schools forum members.

84. Consistency in the presentation of papers also contributes to the effectiveness of meetings: it helps set the tone of meetings, facilitate the engagement of all members and signal the importance the local authority attaches to the work of the schools forum. Ideally such a standard should be agreed between the schools forum and local authority. The publishing of papers as a single pdf file is helpful as it saves time and avoids accessing multiple documents both in advance of, and during, the meeting. An Executive Summary of the reports can provide schools forum members and members of the public with an overview of the agenda and the decisions required.

85. The publishing of papers on a publicly available website well in advance of the meeting ensures that all interested parties are able to access papers. Some schools forums ensure that each represented group meets in the days immediately prior to the schools forum meeting to ensure the agenda is discussed and schools forum members are properly briefed by the group they represent. Although on occasions it's inevitable that schools forums will receive late, or tabled reports it does create some difficulty for members as they will not have been able to seek the views of those they represent.

86. Schools forums can consider adopting a flexible arrangement for time immediately prior to the meeting. For example it could be used for training of new members, or as a drop-in session for members to ask items of clarification, or for members to meet without officers to discuss the agenda.

Chairing the schools forum

87. The Chair of a schools forum plays a key role in setting the tone, pace and overall dynamic of the schools forum. They should provide an environment within which all members are able to contribute fully to discussions and guide the schools forum to making well informed decisions.

88. The relationship between the Chair and the local authority is therefore vital. The Chair should be very clear on the substance of the agenda items, understand the issues involved and the decisions and/or actions that need to be taken in respect of School Forum business. It's good practice for there to be a pre-meeting between the senior officer of the local authority supporting the schools forum and the Chair of the schools forum to ensure that all the issues are clearly understood.

89. Equally, the Chair has the responsibility of representing the views of the schools forum back to the local authority: for instance, they should, where appropriate, take the initiative to make suggestions for improvements to the way the business is conducted, and, in exceptional cases and with support of the members of the schools forum take the view that they do not have sufficient information on which to base a decision and ask that an item is deferred until further information is available. However, in doing so, the Chair and schools forum should be fully aware of the consequences of deferral.

90. The independence of the schools forum is paramount. Enhancing the role of Chair to a paid position, rather than the reimbursement of reasonable expenses, could blur the lines of independence. Similarly, if the Chair undertakes significant work for the local authority in another capacity, for example as an external consultant, they could be viewed as equivalent to an officer of the local authority.

91. Local authorities could consider if sharing contact details of the schools forum Chair with neighbouring authorities would be helpful for peer support and improving networking opportunities.

Clerking the schools forum

92. Clerking of a schools forum should be seen as more than just writing a note of the meeting. A good clerk provides an invaluable link between the members of the schools forum, the Chair and the local authority. It's a role often undertaken by an employee of the local authority though we would recommend consideration is given to the use of an independent clerk.

93. Clerks should manage the logistics of the meeting in terms of ensuring dispatch of papers and producing a note from the meeting. In considering the style of meeting notes consideration should be given to making them intelligible enough for non-attendees to get a sense of the discussion as well as clearly indicating the conclusion and action agreed in relation to each agenda item. Verbatim reports of a schools forum's discussion, however, are unlikely to be very useful. Schools forums may consider whether a simple action log should be maintained by the clerk to ensure all action points agreed are followed up.

94. Beyond this a good clerk can:

- provide the route by which schools forum members can access further information and co-ordinate communication to schools forum members outside of the formal meeting cycle
- respond to any queries about the business of the schools forum from headteachers, governors and others who are not on the schools forum themselves
- be responsible for ensuring contact details of all members are up to date
- maintain the list of members on the schools forum and advise on membership issues in general
- assist with the co-ordination of nomination or election processes run by the constituent groups
- keep the schools forum website up to date, for example by posting latest minutes and papers

- monitor, on a regular basis, the schools forum and general schools funding pages on the GOV.UK website; and arrange for the distribution of any relevant DfE information to schools forum members
- if appropriate, provide technical advice in relation to the schools forum regulations and in relation to the operation of a schools forum's local constitution
- organise, operate and record any voting activity of the schools forum in line with the provisions of its local constitution

95. Not all of these tasks may be able to be undertaken by the schools forum clerk. However, each one is important and there should be arrangements in place to ensure they are discharged adequately.

Good practice for schools forum meetings

96. Schools forums should ensure there is a clear debate of all agenda items. Whilst sub-group meetings are valuable in working through detailed issues, schools forums should consider that the level of debate held at the schools forum meeting and recorded in the minutes will be the official reflection of the level of challenge and discussion on each issue.

97. The use of nameplates for schools forum members also showing which group they are representing can be helpful to members of the public and presenters of papers. In addition the use of coloured cards or coloured nameplates can be helpful when specific members of a schools forum are eligible to vote on specific items, for example, voting on de-delegation or changes to the funding formula.

98. Consultations with the schools forum are a key responsibility of a local authority, ranging from the funding formula to the letting of contracts. Each consultation will be different and depend on the subject being consulted on, but local authorities should consider the following factors as good practice for effective consultation:

- plan and consult early
- allow reasonable timescales for response (as Forum members may need to consult the groups they represent)
- an open and honest approach
- fully inclusive
- allow for ongoing dialogue
- provide feedback

- clear communications

Meeting notes and recording of decisions

99. A vital part of the effective operation of a schools forum is to ensure that an accurate record of the meeting is taken. This must include the clear recording of votes where there are contrary views. Recommendations to, and decisions of, schools forums must be clearly set out.

100. Notes or minutes of each schools forum meeting should be produced and published on the local authority website as soon after the meeting as possible to enable members and others to see the outcome of any discussions and decisions and/or votes. It is good practice to formally agree the accuracy of the note and minutes at a subsequent meeting but the publication of the draft minutes should not be delayed as a result. We would recommend that a log of the decisions is published within three working days of the meeting, and the draft minutes within 10 working days so that interested parties can access them and consult on them, if necessary, before the next meeting.

101. In order to provide clarity about representation at each meeting, it is good practice for the minutes to record the group and/ or subgroup that each member represents against their name.

Communication

102. Communication to the wider educational community of the discussions and debates of, and decisions made by, the schools forum is fundamental to their effective operation. The more schools and other stakeholders know about the proceedings of the schools forum, the more their work will be an important and central part of the context of local educational funding. This is particularly important given the decision making role that the schools forum has. Local authorities should consider the operational differences between the types of stakeholders and plan their communications accordingly. For example ensuring effective communications across the PVI sector may be more difficult than with schools, which are more likely to have existing channels of communication for example, headteacher meetings.

103. Each schools forum should therefore be clear what its channels of communication are. It is fundamental that each member of schools forum represents the views of the group or sub-group that they represent and that all those with an interest in funding work together to ensure that their views are taken into account. Therefore communications directly between members and those they represent is essential; professional associations and phase groups could be suitable channels. This will ensure that schools forum members have an ongoing dialogue with the constituents of their group or sub-group and are therefore well able to represent their

views at schools forum meetings. However, the schools forum should also consider additional communication processes. These could include:

- drawing schools' attention to the fact that all its agendas minutes and papers are publicly available on the local authority's website (this should include the publication of formula consultation documents)
- an annual report on the proceedings of the schools forum
- attendance by the Chair, or other schools forum member, at other relevant consultative or management groups such as any capital working group; or senior management meetings of the Children's Services Department
- a brief email to all schools, early years providers and other stakeholders after each schools forum meeting informing them of the discussions and decisions with a link to the full papers and minutes for further information
- a schools forum newsletter can be a less formal and more interesting way of communicating forum business and raising the profile of the schools forum and its members

News updates

104. Most, but not all, members of the schools forum will already be in receipt of regular information on school funding matters from the local authority and DfE. Other schools forum members should be copied into such information flows so that they can be kept abreast of developments between meetings.

105. Many local authorities have already established dedicated schools forum websites on which they post key information for schools forum members and other interested parties and updated on a regular basis.



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Schools forum self-assessment toolkit

This toolkit provides local authority officers and elected members with a framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their schools forum. The toolkit is designed as a set of questions which can be considered by individuals or the forum as a whole.

Question	Yes / No	Notes
1. Are meeting dates set in well advance and details (including time and venue) published in an accessible manner to enable interested parties to plan their attendance?	Yes	<p>Meeting dates for the forum are set in the October meeting for the following 12 months covering the next 4 meetings. Upon agreement by the forum the appointments are sent out to all members through an outlook appointment.</p> <p>Meetings are typically held on a Thursday and at a time of 1pm.</p> <p>Prior to the pandemic, meetings were held at County Offices Lincoln in Committee Room 1. Since the pandemic, the meetings have been held virtually. Discussions have taken place at the forum and the current position of members is to continue operating virtually, however this is being kept under review.</p>
2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (for example, reporting of funding formula)	Yes	The forum meetings take place in January, April, June and October to coincide with key reporting requirements and timely updates to the forum.
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	Yes	<p>The current format of virtual forum meetings is accessible to the public via the Council's website, and meetings are recorded, which are also available on the Council's website.</p> <p>Observers physically attended forum meetings when they were held in County Offices.</p> <p>Observers can view meeting information via the public link on the website.</p>
4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated?	Yes	https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/mg/CommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=166

Question	Yes / No	Notes
5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?	Yes	Only in exceptional circumstances is this not achieved.
6. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?	Yes	The papers are also electronically circulated to members of the forum.
7. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?	Yes	If such a situation arose as described (e.g. assessment of the affordability of the schools funding formula and its time sensitives), yes, the papers would be published to forum members and on the website.
8. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (for example, within 2 to 3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?	Yes	Draft Minutes are published on the website as soon as possible after the meeting following internal checking by officers.
9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?	Yes	The minutes summaries what was presented, any discussion that occurred and what actions were resolved for the transaction of business.
10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a clear process for ensuring proportional representation - the process for electing members and their tenure - the timescale for review is clearly set out - the process for dealing with repetitive non attenders 	Yes	<p>Lincolnshire's Schools' Forum Constitution and Membership advises on the composition of the forum and full details are provided regarding schools membership based on the number of pupils.</p> <p>The process for election is set out in section 4.10 of the constitution, which is supplemented by information circulated at the time of the election.</p> <p>Section 6(m) covers the process for a member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings.</p> <p>The constitution is reviewed annually.</p>

Question	Yes / No	Notes
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	Yes*	<p>An introductory email, welcomes new members in which a request is made of members' details including their substitute member. Further details include access to the meeting (i.e. a physical meeting or remote); details of meeting dates; website link to the forum home page, and a copy of the Schools Forum guidance and constitution for their information.</p> <p>*The Local Authority has reviewed the previous training offer that was in place to support new members or existing members requiring a refresh. The Local Authority is committed to providing an updated training offer for new members in the autumn term.</p> <p>The Local Authority is mindful of the changing schools funding landscape and the potential impact this may have on the Schools' Forum responsibilities.</p>
12. Is the election process clear and transparent? Representatives are elected only by the group they are representing, whether phase-specific for maintained schools, or by the proprietors of academies for academy members.	Yes	<p>An email is circulated to each sector along with a copy of a letter which explains the election process; a copy of the election timetable, and a copy of a nomination form.</p> <p>This email is sent to school leaders for maintained schools and Proprietors for Academies.</p> <p>Membership is reviewed annually in June to ensure it is fully representative of different school sectors and in proportion to the number of children allocated to each sector.</p>
13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?	Yes	<p>Recommendations are clearly listed on the front page of each report.</p>

Question	Yes / No	Notes
14. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (for example, by use of name plates, indicating sector)	Yes	<p>For physically attended meetings, forum members have name plates, which are colour shaded to indicate the sector they represent.</p> <p>Each agenda pack includes a section: Membership of the Schools' Forum.</p> <p>The Schools' Forum Clerk asks members to confirm their attendance and confirms Local Authority officers in attendance.</p>
15. Does the chair manage the meeting well, ensuring that all are able to contribute to the agenda items, that no bias towards any sector is evident and that no single person or organisation is able to dominate the discussion?	Yes	The chair encourages interaction and engagement from all forum members.
16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?	Yes	All forum members have the opportunity to express their views in discussions.
17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feedback after meetings?	Yes	<p>Forum members do provide views on the reports being presented, that involves representing Lincolnshire schools overall and their sector.</p> <p>It is the expectation of forum membership that they feedback to their sector.</p>
18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?	Yes	The voting arrangements are made clear in the report itself, and the chair relays this message to forum members.
19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?	Yes	The constitution defines which item each sector is able to vote on. The report presented will also highlight when only one sector is allowed to vote. Voting is counted by a show of hands (in person), or through a roll call (virtually). The Chairman will ask those who are voting whether they are for / against / abstain from the vote.
20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?	Yes	Lincolnshire's Schools' Forum Constitution and Membership: section 5(f): In the event of an equality of votes the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

Question	Yes / No	Notes
21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?	Yes	<p>Local Authority officers review the guidance periodically to ensure compliance.</p> <p>The Constitution will be reviewed annually at the June Forum meeting.</p> <p>Lincolnshire's Schools' Forum Constitution and Membership was formally approved on the 17 September 2021 by the Executive Councillor.</p>

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Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum
Date:	29 June 2023
Subject:	Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula - Government consultation outcomes

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Schools' Forum with an update on the Government consultation response publication to Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula.

Recommendation(s):

To note the content of the report.

Background

In March 2022, the Government in its response to the consultation 'Fair Funding for all: Completing our Reforms to the NFF' confirmed their intention to move forward with plans to introduce the direct National Funding Formula (NFF), including the Government bringing forward the relevant legislation required to enable this to happen.

A report to the Schools' Forum was provided in April 2022 outlining the consultation outcomes and the Governments position. A link to the consultation outcomes is as follows:

[Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.education.gov.uk/fair-school-funding-for-all-completing-our-reforms-to-the-national-funding-formula)

The objective of the Government in implementing a NFF was to create consistency in funding across all schools nationally ensuring a fairer settlement for each school through a single, national funding formula without local adjustments.

Currently, Local Authorities (LAs) have the responsibility for agreeing and calculating schools funding allocations, however LAs are required to operate within defined parameters within which local formulae's must operate. The focus of the consultation was

on progressively tightening the rules governing LAs' flexibilities over school funding, so that school allocations move closer to the NFF. This was implemented by the Department in 2023/24.

The Council continues to adopt the NFF since its introduction in 2018/19 due to the increase in per pupil funding levels being seen across mainstream schools. It is still however important to ensure funding formulas are scrutinised by Schools' Forums and take into account schools' views on funding decisions, and therefore allowing local flexibility to best respond appropriately to issues facing their schools locally. Through a 'direct' NFF, it is a necessity that the Government engage with LAs and schools on the formula and those views are listened to, not only on how funding is distributed (including being underpinned by key assumptions and principles using 'modelled' school settings), but also on the quantum of funding available for schools through a zero-based review. It is imperative that the right level of funding is going into schools to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people. The approach would ensure fair funding is achieved and would also be responsive to cost changes taking place from year to year. This will ensure accountability of the NFF through a centralised system.

On 7 June 2022 the DfE launched its second consultation which considered the next steps in completing the NFF reforms to move all schools onto the 'direct' NFF. The consultation was more future focused rather than for 2023/24. The consultation outcomes were published on the 26 April 2023, which can be found using the following link:

[Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula Government consultation response \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/2022/06/07/consultation-on-the-next-steps-in-completing-the-nff-reforms-to-move-all-schools-onto-the-direct-nff)

A series of questions were asked by the Department through the consultation and the key outcomes of these are outlined below.

Interaction between high needs and schools funding

- The Government outline that the interaction between funding for mainstream schools and funding for high needs is a key factor for future reform.

Block Transfers to the High Needs block

- The Government has confirmed that there will be continued flexibility to transfer funding to LAs High Needs budgets, through a new mechanism to adjust mainstream schools funding.
- LA transfers will be subject to an application process to the Secretary of State for final decision following consultation with local schools. Currently, LAs can transfer up to 0.5% of its Schools block to the High Needs block with the agreement of their Schools' Forum following consultation with all schools and academies, therefore this proposal is further tightening up the arrangements on Schools block transfers.
- The Government expectations are that the impact of the SEND reforms will bring financial sustainability, therefore reducing the need for LAs to make such applications.

However, with the current demands and the ability of LAs to manage their costs within their High Needs block, local level adjustments are still required.

- Applications for block transfers will require submission to the Secretary of State in the Autumn, with final decision taken early in the new year.
- The majority of respondents supported the idea of a standard short menu of options when making adjustments to the NFF allocations where block transfers are agreed.
- The Government will engage further with LAs and key stakeholders on the detail of this criteria.

Indicative SEND budgets

- The Government is to introduce a national approach to calculating schools' indicative SEND budgets (i.e. replacing notional SEN budgets). This is a move away from it being determined locally. Indicative SEND budgets are a non-ringfenced portion of a schools core budget for meeting the costs of provision for pupils with special educational needs. It can only act as an indicator of what might be needed.
- Lincolnshire along with majority of respondents were supportive of this approach. The concept was introduced by the Department, and it was expected that the Government's NFF implementation in 2018/19 would have determined a national indicative SEND budget at that time.
- A nationally set indicative SEND budget would improve consistency of funding and practice across the country.
- Further Government consultation will take place on the design and operation of this approach, including aligning with the reforms in the Government's SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.
- LAs targeted funding is often directly linked to the notional SEN determination; therefore it is important that changes do not create an additional burden to LAs High Needs blocks.

Schools Growth funding

- The Government intends to introduce further requirements on how LAs can operate their growth funding to deliver greater consistency in its application.
- The Government also intends to establish a basic level of funding for planned reorganisations. Such reorganisations relate to schools agreeing to increase their planned admission number (PAN) to enable LAs to meet their place sufficiency duty.
- The Government intends to engage further with LAs and key stakeholders on the design of these new requirements.
- The funding received by LAs from Government will not be re-based for 2024/25, but the Government will explore this in future years. The Government intend to revise the current growth allocation methodology to allocate funding on the basis of growth and falling rolls.

Lincolnshire's current policies do satisfy the needs of schools in supporting planned growth reorganisation, which have been developed with the sector over a number of years. 82% of respondents to the consultation supported the case for retaining local flexibility, as opposed to a national standardised system. The Department's stakeholder

involvement will be important in drawing out the Department's interpretation of 'some local flexibility' within their future schools growth arrangements.

Implementing a national split site factor

- The Government's position is to establish a national, centralised approach to the split sites factor funding for schools.
- Allocations of split site funding will be made on the basis of 'basic eligibility' and 'distance eligibility' from 2024/25.
- Basic eligibility criteria has been established for split site funding, such as, separated by a public road or railway; site is used by 5 to 16-year-old pupils that attend the school during school hours for the majority of those hours; etc.
- 500 metres between sites is the distance threshold, however tapering funding will be applied, starting from 100 metres.
- Funding split site funding to the maximum of 60% of the lump sum (£76,800). The Government's view is that an additional site should cost less to run than the schools main site, and funding should be seen as a contribution to overall costs.
- The basic eligibility element will be assigned two-thirds of the available funding and one-third of the available funding through the distance element.

The Council's local arrangements for split site funding are well established for reviewing and determining local premise factors, which broadly reflect the costs that these schools are incurring, i.e. considers the individual circumstances of the school. The Departments stance is a move away from this and funding should be seen as a contribution to the additional site. Three Lincolnshire secondary schools currently in receipt of split site funding will see reductions in their allocation, however the minimum funding guarantee will provide a form of funding protection to provide time in adapting to a change in funding level.

Other consultation outcomes include:

- Where LAs operate a falling role factor, all local schools can be considered, rather than it being available to only schools judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.
- The Government will expand the use of the growth and falling roll funding to allow LAs to fund revenue costs associated with repurposing or reducing school places, e.g. creating resource based provision.
- All mainstream schools (maintained and academies) will have access to the Government's popular growth funding. The Department will be determining the limited circumstances in which schools can access this funding.
- The Government will continue to progress plans to amend the exceptional funding factor by adopting a national application system rather than a local-led approach. The threshold level of 1% of the schools budget will remain in place, however this may change in the future. Lincolnshire has a local primary school rents factor within the exceptional funding factor.
- The Government will use local formulae baselines for schools when transitions to the direct NFF take place.

- The Government intends to move to a more simplified pupil-led funding protection for the minimum funding guarantee under the direct NFF. The LA notes the Department's desires for simplicity, but changes to the direct NFF will likely continue to take place and that sparsity funding at a school level could change from year-to-year, therefore having protection to school-led funding is important to safeguard schools from significant changes in funding.

Next Steps

The Government will announce the 2024/25 NFF for schools and high needs in July 2023. This will also confirm the Government's requirements on LAs to bring their local funding formulae closer to the NFF in 2024/25.

The Government intended to undertake stakeholder engagement to develop further the recommendations outlined within this latest consultation, as the Department move schools to the direct NFF.

Conclusion

The Government have introduced measures in 2023/24 to move more LAs towards the 'direct' NFF. This does not impact Lincolnshire's mainstream schools as the Council currently adopts the NFF.

The latest Government consultation outcome proposals and themes are to either develop national funding mechanisms (such as the split site factor and block transfer process), or to drive greater consistency in the application of funding locally, such as the schools growth funding.

The Council will continue to engage with the Department on these proposals and any future developments including responding to Government consultations to ensure Lincolnshire schools are represented. The Council still consider the importance of retaining local flexibility and decision-making powers.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

The Government direction of moving towards a 'direct' formula along with further proposals for nationally driven allocations, could see the LA lose local flexibility and decision-making powers for all aspects of schools funding. This is a risk, as the LA will no longer have the powers and limited influence nationally to be able to respond to local needs and demands on a timely basis.

The Council will continue to engage with the Department on future funding proposals, including undertaking financial modelling to understand the impact this will have at an individual school level.

Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula Government consultation response	Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula Government consultation response (publishing.service.gov.uk)
National Funding Formula Government consultation outcomes – Schools’ Forum report (21 April 2022)	Report Reference: (moderngov.co.uk)
Completing the reforms to the National Funding Formula – Government Consultation response	Completing the reforms to the National Funding Formula - government consultation response (publishing.service.gov.uk)

This report was written by Mark Popplewell, Strategic Finance Lead, Children’s Services, who can be contacted at mark.popplewell@lincolnshire.gov.uk.



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum
Date:	29 June 2023
Subject:	Section 251 Budget Statement 2023/24

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide Schools' Forum with a copy of the Section 251 (s.251) budget statement for the 2023/24 financial year.

Recommendation(s):

The Schools' Forum is asked to note the content of the report.

Background

Local Authorities (LAs) are required under s.251 of the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 to prepare and submit an education and children's social care budget statement for the relevant period to the Secretary of State for Education by 30 April each year. The s.251 return is intended to provide a clear picture of the LAs planned spending on its schools budget, de-delegated items, high needs budget, early years budget, central provision within the schools budget and children's and young people's services.

The LAs s.251 budget statement and the Department for Education's (DfE's) benchmarking data that is published later in the year should assist the Schools' Forum's consideration of budget levels across the activity headings.

The information for 2023/24 was submitted to the DfE via its data collection and management system for education (COLLECT). As is customary, the DfE will carry out a number of checks on it, and should any amendments be required, it will be updated at a later stage. However, to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements, the LA has published the Early Years report, the LA Table report and the Schools Table report on Lincolnshire County Council's website at:

[School finances – Section 251 budget statements - Lincolnshire County Council](#)

This allows all maintained schools and academies; private, voluntary and independent providers (that are funded to provide free early years provision to two, three and four year olds) oversight of how budgets have been set for the financial year.

The overall Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding is considered when the LA completes its annual detailed budget setting exercise. For 2023/24, the DSG continues to consist of four blocks – Schools Block, Central Schools Services Block (CSSB), High Needs Block and Early Years Block, each of these blocks have been determined by a separate national funding formula. The Schools Block continues to be ring-fenced and LAs are only able to transfer 0.5% of their Schools Block funding to an alternative block with the agreement of their Schools' Forum following consultation with all schools and academies. Movements of budget from the CSSB to the Schools Block, or from the High Needs Block to any other block are not subject to any limit and can be made in consultation with Schools' Forum.

The only block transfer the LA has made for 2023/24 relates to a £0.495m movement from available monies in the CSSB to the Schools Block to replicate the Government's schools' national funding formula factors and monetary values in full (except for the Key Stage Age Weighted Pupil Unit value, which was adjusted downward by 0.075%) and the minimum funding guarantee protection continuing to be applied at the +0.5% increase in per pupil funding, which is consistent with the 2022/23 treatment (the MFG range is between +0.0% and +0.50% per pupil in 2023/24). The Schools' Forum supported the block transfer decision on 19 January 2023.

The transfer to the Schools block was required to meet the additional cost from an increase in Free School Meal eligibility due to the pandemic. The increase in the recorded FSMs eligibility was 8.10% and 14.38% for primary and secondary schools respectively when comparing to the October 2021 schools census¹. Central Government's 2023/24 DSG funding to the LA does not reflect this increased funding requirement since it uses prior year pupil characteristics data. This time lag had previously been raised to the DfE, however the expectation from the Department is for LAs to determine a formula that is affordable.

As detailed in the Implementation of the direct National Funding Formula paper presented at this meeting, the Government has conducted its latest consultation on how further reforms to the NFF will be implemented, with the intention of moving to a 'hard' formula. The Government expect to have moved all schools onto the NFF within the next five years, by the 2027/28 funding year.

Attached to this report is a copy of LA Table 2023/24. This provides an overall picture of the funding being allocated directly to schools and high needs delegations; the amount the Council spends on education centrally and children's social care.

¹ Comparing the FSMs recorded on the October 2019 schools census to the latest census, the primary sector eligibility has increased by 55% and secondary schools eligibility by 70%. The schools population has only grown by 2% in the same period.

The total DSG for 2023/24 is £725.869m². The Schools Block amount has been adjusted upwards for the block transfer to £551.333m, of this 99.87%³ is devolved to schools with the remainder supporting schools' growth funding in accordance with the LA policy in providing sufficient school places for the children of Lincolnshire through planned reorganisations. The Early Years block is allocated to the sector based on participation levels, these budgets are set prudently, and it is anticipated that 96.18% of this block of funding will be allocated to the Early Years sector by the end of the financial year with the remainder funding a number of statutory duties of the LA in relation to the provision of support for Early Years Education and Childcare provision. Within the High Needs Block 77.01% is earmarked to devolve out to Lincolnshire schools, colleges and early years for pupils requiring additional support, with the remainder of funding for supporting school support services (including outreach arrangements and central support) and externally commissioned placements for Lincolnshire pupils.

There continues to be limitations in terms of movement of funding between blocks to respond to arising cost pressures. This is in the context of an increasing number of LAs who are incurring a deficit on their overall DSG largely due to overspend on their High Needs block. The Society of County Treasurers recently reported the value of LAs in deficit has risen to £2.4bn in 2022/23, six times higher than levels in 2018. The DfE now have three programmes offering direct support in respect of the effectiveness and sustainability of LAs High Needs systems. The aim of all three programmes is to secure sustainable management of LA High Needs systems.

Lincolnshire remains in a strong position financially to respond to the demands, the High Needs Block will continue to require careful and prudent management going forward. High Needs funding continues to see growth in the demand for more specialist support for young people, which is having a material financial impact on those centrally held demand-led budgets in the High Needs block, such as out of county placements, top up funding for Education Health Care (EHC) plans for mainstream schools, special school placements, and meeting the education needs for pupils through alternative provision arrangements.

The Government is continually moving to a basis for distributing funding to LAs for children and young people with high needs, taking into account an up-to-date assessment of the level of need in each area as opposed to funding on the basis of historic spending. LAs will be protected under the formula by seeing a minimum increase of 5% per head in 2023/24 compared to their 2022/23 funding baseline level. Lincolnshire's High Needs block allocation for 2023/24 has increased by £11.080m from the prior year. This includes the additional £5.008m through the additional £2bn funding announcement in the Autumn statement. The SEND Green paper acknowledged the unsustainable SEND system and considers ways to address this. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan Right Support, Right Place, Right Time (published in March 2023) is the mechanism for implementing change.

² Local Authority Table 1.9.1 shows £723.673m the difference of £2.196m relates to Further Education and Independent Learning Providers Place Funding that the LA are required to exclude from the return.

³ Growth relating to the secondary sector is included within the Local Authority Proforma Tool.

More young people requiring specialist support is having a material financial impact on the High Needs block. This remains a financial challenge. In Lincolnshire, transformational work is considered fundamental to securing further improved outcomes for young people with SEND through a truly integrated approach, whilst also securing an offer for Lincolnshire that is financially sustainable within the central Government allocation. The SEND Transformation Board is governing the transformational process and its key work streams, including of monitoring of progress against our ambitions.

In 2023/24, Lincolnshire received c.£8.692m of protection funding following the implementation of the High Needs national funding formula to provide stability against the prior year's funding level. The LA is therefore mindful of future changes to the SEND system and how this could impact the financial regime, but it is hoped the Government continue to manage funding changes in a planned and co-ordinated way through protection arrangements to avoid cliff-edge funding.

Conclusion

Officers will continue to review the Government's publications that implicate 2023/24 funding including amendments to the DfE's School and Early Years Finance Regulations, to ensure full compliance is achieved in 2023/24 and in future years.

Financial monitoring of budgets will be carried out throughout 2023/24 in accordance with the Council's budget monitoring framework.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) historical commitment funding reductions will continue to be reviewed including dialog with the Department to secure a long-term solution for the PFI contract ending in August 2032.

For the third year running, an increase in FSM eligibility has impacted the affordability of the Schools block for the LA to continue to replicate the National Funding Formula in full. The LA is limited to the funding determined through the Dedicated Schools Grant, in particular Schools block when determining schools budgets. There is a concern that FSM eligibility could continue to rise due to the current financial climate and cost of living crisis and the impact this will have on the affordability of the Schools Block for 2024/25 to replicate the National Funding Formula.

High Needs Funding – there continues to be a significant growth in the demand for more specialist support for young people, which is having a material financial impact on those centrally held budgets of the High Needs block. The Government has responded positively to the financial demands placed upon the High Needs block. The SEND Transformation Board is governing the transformational process and its key work streams, including monitoring of progress against our ambitions.

Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	The LA's s.251 Table 1 data for 2023/24

Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Schools Funding Arrangements 2023/24 (Item 5)	Agenda for Lincolnshire Schools' Forum on Thursday, 19th January, 2023, 1.30 pm (moderngov.co.uk)

This report was written by Elizabeth Bowes, who can be contacted on 01522 554905 or Elizabeth.bowes@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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LA Table: FUNDING PERIOD (2023-24)

Department for Education Section 251 Financial Data Collection

Report produced on 08/06/2023 13:09:43

Local Authority: 925 Lincolnshire

Appendix A

Description	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	SEN/ Special Schools	AP/ PRUs	Post School	Gross	Income	Net
1.0.1 Individual Schools Budget (before academy recoupment), including sixth form grant for maintained schools, but excluding high needs place funding	£41,906,842.00	£279,479,016.68	£272,841,171.32				£594,227,030.00		£594,227,030.00
1.0.2 High needs place funding within Individual Schools Budget (before academy recoupment), excluding funding for 16-19 academies and free schools and FE colleges and independent learning providers	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£21,845,833.00	£2,520,000.00		£24,365,833.00		£24,365,833.00
1.1.1 Contingencies		£762,033.00	£0.00				£762,033.00	£0.00	£762,033.00
1.1.2 Behaviour support services		£0.00	£0.00				£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.1.3 Support to UPEG and bilingual learners		£240,821.00	£0.00				£240,821.00	£54,076.00	£186,745.00
1.1.4 Free school meals eligibility		£0.00	£0.00				£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.1.5 Insurance		£0.00	£0.00				£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.1.6 Museum and Library services		£0.00	£0.00				£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.1.7 Licences/subscriptions		£0.00	£0.00				£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.1.8 Staff costs – supply cover excluding cover for facility time		£0.00	£0.00				£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.1.9 Staff costs – supply cover for facility time		£0.00	£0.00				£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.2.1 Top-up funding – maintained schools	£0.00	£8,141,112.28	£1,014,047.58	£5,517,068.34	£3,369,701.00		£18,041,929.20	£0.00	£18,041,929.20
1.2.2 Top-up funding – academies, free schools and colleges	£52,743.42	£11,413,047.22	£13,261,148.07	£13,418,015.68	£0.00	£5,002,909.55	£43,147,863.94	£0.00	£43,147,863.94
1.2.3 Top-up and other funding – non-maintained and independent providers	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£14,622,112.48	£0.00	£1,387,650.82	£16,009,763.30	£0.00	£16,009,763.30
1.2.4 Additional high needs targeted funding for mainstream schools and academies	£0.00	£2,519,069.40	£931,710.60				£3,450,780.00	£0.00	£3,450,780.00
1.2.5 SEN support services	£2,504,342.64	£1,083,881.74	£288,768.37	£267,270.23	£118,101.69	£12,900.21	£4,275,264.88	£0.00	£4,275,264.88
1.2.6 Hospital education services				£2,735,103.00	£30,000.00		£2,765,103.00	£0.00	£2,765,103.00
1.2.7 Other alternative provision services	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£4,973,220.00	£0.00	£4,973,220.00	£0.00	£4,973,220.00
1.2.8 Support for inclusion	£451,727.96	£2,725,386.69	£2,438,046.06	£553,114.61	£5,721.10	£72,763.11	£6,246,759.53	£594,838.00	£5,651,921.53
1.2.9 Special schools and PRUs in financial difficulty				£0.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.2.10 PFI/ BSF costs at special schools, AP/ PRUs and Post 16 institutions only				£1,182,256.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,182,256.00	£0.00	£1,182,256.00
1.2.11 Direct payments (SEN and disability)	£0.00	£94,040.52	£244,473.18	£19,330.50	£0.00	£274,423.80	£632,268.00	£0.00	£632,268.00
1.2.13 Therapies and other health related services	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.3.1 Central expenditure on early years entitlement	£1,925,989.00						£1,925,989.00	£0.00	£1,925,989.00
1.4.1 Contribution to combined budgets	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.2 School admissions	£0.00	£608,673.24	£115,937.76	£0.00	£0.00		£724,611.00	£0.00	£724,611.00
1.4.3 Servicing of schools forums	£300.00	£15,400.00	£3,000.00	£1,000.00	£300.00		£20,000.00	£0.00	£20,000.00
1.4.4 Termination of employment costs	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.5 Falling Rolls Fund	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.6 Capital expenditure from revenue (CERA)	£0.00	£1,108,989.94	£0.00	£1,216,424.06	£0.00		£2,325,414.00	£1,681,028.00	£644,386.00
1.4.7 Prudential borrowing costs	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.8 Fees to independent schools without SEN	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.9 Equal pay - back pay	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.10 Pupil growth	£0.00	£728,077.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		£728,077.00	£0.00	£728,077.00
1.4.11 SEN transport	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.12 Exceptions agreed by Secretary of State	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.13 Infant class sizes		£0.00					£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.4.14 Other Items	£7,062.18	£587,406.36	£149,551.20	£35,310.90	£7,062.18	£7,062.18	£793,455.00		£793,455.00
1.5.1 Education welfare service							£528,462.00	£0.00	£528,462.00
1.5.2 Asset management							£399,942.00	£0.00	£399,942.00
1.5.3 Statutory/ Regulatory duties							£899,412.00	£0.00	£899,412.00
1.6.1 Central support services							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.6.2 Education welfare service							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.6.3 Asset Management							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.6.4 Statutory/ Regulatory duties							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.6.5 Premature retirement cost/ Redundancy costs (new provisions)							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.6.6 Monitoring national curriculum assessment							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.6.7 School Improvement							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.7.1 Other Specific Grants	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.8.1 TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET (before Academy recoupment)	£46,849,007.20	£309,506,955.07	£291,287,854.14	£61,412,838.80	£11,024,105.97	£6,757,709.67	£728,666,286.85	£2,329,942.00	£726,336,344.85
1.9.1 Estimated Dedicated Schools Grant for 2023-24 (before academy recoupment), excluding high needs place funding for 16-19 academies and free schools and FE colleges and independent learning providers							£723,672,591.00		
1.9.2 Dedicated Schools Grant brought forward from 2022-23 (please show a deficit as a negative)							£16,028,325.00		
1.9.3 Dedicated Schools Grant carry forward to 2024-25 (please show a deficit as a positive)							-£16,028,325.00		
1.9.4 Grant for maintained school sixth forms							£2,663,754.00		
1.9.5 Local Authority additional contribution							£0.00		
1.9.6 Total funding supporting the Schools Budget (the sum of lines 1.9.1 to 1.9.5)							£726,336,345.00		
1.10.1 Academy recoupment from the Dedicated Schools Grant of schools block funding (show as a negative)							-£401,601,325.00		
1.10.2 Academy recoupment from the Dedicated Schools Grant of high needs place funding shown under line 1.0.2 (show as a negative)							-£16,830,835.00		
2.0.1 Central support services							£3,347,865.66	£2,267,903.05	£1,079,962.61
2.0.2 Education welfare service							£858,864.48	£133,120.00	£725,744.48
2.0.3 School improvement							£735,636.00	£510.00	£735,126.00
2.0.4 Asset management - education							£49,891.31	£3,880.00	£46,011.31
2.0.5 Statutory/ Regulatory duties - education							£967,169.47	£225,819.99	£741,349.48
2.0.6 Premature retirement cost/ Redundancy costs (new provisions)							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
2.0.7 Monitoring national curriculum assessment							£134,669.60	£0.00	£134,669.60
2.1.1 Educational psychology service							£1,013,077.43	£0.00	£1,013,077.43
2.1.2 SEN administration, assessment and coordination and monitoring							£3,591,310.46	£18,321.00	£3,572,989.46
2.1.3 Independent Advice and Support Services (Parent partnership), guidance and information							£434,772.67	£92,381.31	£342,391.36
2.1.4 Home to school transport (pre 16): SEN transport expenditure	£0.00	£1,744,361.70	£3,456,550.02	£13,705,728.51	£18,704.95		£18,925,345.18	£1,157.14	£18,924,188.04
2.1.5 Home to school transport (pre 16): mainstream home to school transport expenditure	£0.00	£4,938,216.61	£14,613,246.60	£0.00	£18,005.83		£19,569,469.04	£0.00	£19,569,469.04
2.1.6 Home to post-16 provision: SEN/ LLD transport expenditure (aged 16-18)				£0.00	£0.00	£3,053,195.78	£3,053,195.78	£507,230.18	£2,545,965.60

Description	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	SEN/ Special Schools	AP/ PRUs	Post School	Gross	Income	Net
2.1.7 Home to post-16 provision: SEN/ LLDD transport expenditure (aged 19-25)			£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£99,904.07	£99,904.07	£21,581.12	£78,322.95
2.1.8 Home to post-16 provision transport: mainstream home to post-16 transport expenditure			£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,265,288.61	£1,265,288.61	£550,318.56	£714,970.05
2.1.9 Supply of school places							£210,796.65	£31,061.00	£179,735.65
2.2.1 Other spend not funded from the Schools Budget							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
2.3.1 Young people's learning and development			£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£153,734.22	£153,734.22	£3,240.00	£150,494.22
2.3.2 Adult and Community learning							£2,491,973.47	£2,199,855.00	£292,118.47
2.3.3 Pension costs							£4,837,642.55	£33,190.00	£4,804,452.55
2.3.4 Joint use arrangements							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
2.3.5 Insurance							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
2.4.1 Other Specific Grant							£4,888,358.00	£4,888,358.00	£0.00
2.5.1 Total Other education and community budget							£66,628,964.65	£10,977,926.35	£55,651,038.30
3.0.1 Funding for individual Sure Start Children's Centres							£361,643.09	£28,390.00	£333,253.09
3.0.2 Funding for local authority provided or commissioned area wide services delivered through Sure Start Children's Centres							£3,702,817.00	£73,118.40	£3,629,698.60
3.0.3 Funding on local authority management costs relating to Sure Start Children's Centres							£300,000.00	£0.00	£300,000.00
3.0.4 Other spend on children under 5							£126,262.17	£36,000.00	£90,262.17
3.0.5 Total Sure Start children's centres and other spend on children under 5							£4,490,722.26	£137,508.40	£4,353,213.86
3.1.1 Residential care							£15,142,123.09	£51,000.00	£15,091,123.09
3.1.2a Fostering services (excluding fees and allowances for LA foster carers)							£6,758,975.10	£1,432,006.31	£5,326,968.79
3.1.2b Fostering services (fees and allowances for LA foster carers)							£5,672,729.53	£0.00	£5,672,729.53
3.1.3 Adoption services							£2,733,828.74	£926,254.56	£1,807,574.18
3.1.4 Special guardianship support							£3,222,829.08	£0.00	£3,222,829.08
3.1.5 Other children looked after services							£1,249,932.36	£248.05	£1,249,684.31
3.1.6 Short breaks (respite) for looked after disabled children							£86,297.52	£0.00	£86,297.52
3.1.7 Children placed with family and friends							£2,097,831.52	£0.00	£2,097,831.52
3.1.8 Education of looked after children	£0.00	£0.00	£101,960.92	£140,803.18	£0.00		£242,764.10	£98,721.03	£144,043.07
3.1.9 Leaving care support services							£4,250,998.57	£1,388,855.00	£2,862,143.57
3.1.10 Asylum seeker services children							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
3.1.11 Total Children Looked After	£0.00	£0.00	£101,960.92	£140,803.18	£0.00		£41,458,309.61	£3,897,084.95	£37,561,224.66
3.2.1 Other children and families services							£1,584,067.74	£2,763.78	£1,581,303.96
3.3.1 Social work (including LA functions in relation to child protection)							£25,684,827.09	£1,081,136.72	£24,603,690.37
3.3.2 Commissioning and Children's Services Strategy							£6,838,622.48	£240,820.37	£6,597,802.11
3.3.3 Local Safeguarding Children Board							£680,248.60	£547,618.85	£132,629.75
3.3.4 Total Safeguarding Children and Young People's Services							£33,203,698.17	£1,869,575.94	£31,334,122.23
3.4.1 Direct payments							£576,665.05	£0.00	£576,665.05
3.4.2 Short breaks (respite) for disabled children							£2,644,107.43	£530,957.00	£2,113,150.43
3.4.3 Other support for disabled children							£1,049,361.67	£0.00	£1,049,361.67
3.4.4 Targeted family support							£23,128,083.97	£16,355,618.31	£6,772,465.66
3.4.5 Universal family support							£520,214.98	£1,492.90	£518,722.08
3.4.6 Total Family Support Services							£27,918,433.10	£16,888,068.21	£11,030,364.89
3.5.1 Universal services for young people							£911,752.74	£53,089.30	£858,663.44
3.5.2 Targeted services for young people							£10,428,779.82	£334,413.93	£10,094,365.89
3.5.3 Total Services for young people							£11,340,532.56	£387,503.23	£10,953,029.33
3.6.1 Youth justice							£6,076,360.26	£4,798,198.14	£1,278,162.12
4.0.1 Capital Expenditure from Revenue (CERA) (Non-schools budget functions and Children's and young people services)							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
5.0.1 Total Schools Budget and Other education and community budget (excluding CERA) (lines 1.8.1 and 2.5.1)							£795,295,251.50	£13,307,868.35	£781,987,383.15
5.0.2 Total Children and Young People's Services and Youth Justice Budget (excluding CERA)(lines 3.0.5 + 3.1.11 + 3.2.1 + 3.3.4 + 3.4.6 + 3.5.3 + 3.6.1)							£126,072,123.70	£27,980,702.65	£98,091,421.05
6 Total Schools Budget, Other education and community budget, Children and Young People's Services and Youth Justice Budget (excluding CERA) (lines 5.0.1 + 5.0.2)							£921,367,375.20	£41,288,571.00	£880,078,804.20
7 Capital Expenditure (excluding CERA)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£18,100,000.00	£0.00		£18,100,000.00	£0.00	£18,100,000.00
8a.1 Substance misuse services (Drugs, Alcohol and Volatile substances) (included in 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 above)							£78,136.25	£1,861.83	£76,274.42
8a.2 Teenage pregnancy services (included in 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 above)							£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
1.8.1a DSG Block Planned Expenditure							Allocated DSG funding	Planned Spend	Net
Schools (before academy recoupment)							£550,838,289.00	£551,333,289.00	£-495,000.00
Central School Services							£4,781,163.00	£4,286,163.00	£495,000.00
High Needs (excluding post school)							£124,220,308.00	£124,220,308.00	£0.00
Early Years							£43,832,831.00	£43,832,831.00	£0.00
Total							£723,672,591.00	£723,672,591.00	£0.00



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum
Date:	29 June 2023
Subject:	Annual Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Schools' Forum with:

- A high level update on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) both nationally and within Lincolnshire.
- An overview of the high needs' costs illustrating increasing pressures on the High Needs Budget.

Recommendation(s):

The Schools' Forum is invited to consider and comment on the contents of the report and address any questions to the officers in attendance, noting that a supplementary report will be shared with the forum in autumn 2023.

Background

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 aligned and streamlined the system of SEN assessment, support and provision for children and young people 0-25, bringing together the provisions of a variety of Acts covering education, health and care as well as introducing new provisions, statutory implementation of associated duties, regulations and a new SEND Code of Practice.

The reforms set out in the Act include:

- I. Extending the SEND system from birth to 25, giving children, young people and their parents/carers greater control and choice in decisions about provision;
- II. Replacing Statements and Learning Difficulties Assessments (LDA) with a birth-to-25 Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan;

- III. Offering families the option of personal budgets when an EHC plan is implemented;
- IV. Improving co-operation between all the services and requiring particularly Local Authorities (LA) and health authorities (HA) to work together;
- V. Requiring LAs to involve children, young people and parents in reviewing and developing provision for those with special educational needs and to publish a 'local offer' of support; and
- VI. Publication of a new SEN Code of Practice and regulations covering the work of early years providers, schools and post-16 education providers, LAs and HAs.

There is a sharper focus on the measurable outcomes for Children and Young People. It is expected that the majority of children with SEND will have their needs met and outcomes achieved through mainstream education provision and will not need EHC Plans. These are explicit themes running throughout the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

Parents and young people must be involved directly in discussions and decisions about the support available to them individually and more strategically, particularly through the 'co-production' and delivery of the SEND assessment, the EHC planning process and the Local Offer.

Each stage of the EHC Needs Assessment process is subject to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal and in some cases the Local Government Ombudsman.

A child or young person has special educational needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

Note

Due to the late publication of national data it has not been possible to provide the comprehensive annual report that is usually shared at this time of year. The SEN2 return, submitted in March each year, was a much more detailed, pupil-level data submission this year and, as a result the DfE publication on the national picture was later (8th June). At the time of writing, the comparative data analysis required for this report is still awaited. This report provides only a high level overview of SEND information until a more detailed analysis and comparison to national data can be undertaken.

The report does, however, include all updated budgetary information for the last financial year.

Lincolnshire and the national context

In 2022 there was a 9% increase nationally in the overall number of EHC Plans (from 2021) whilst in Lincolnshire the increase was lower at 6.5%. In January 2023 (SEN2 census date), Lincolnshire held 6,958 EHC Plans.

There were 114,457 initial requests for an EHC Needs Assessment in England in 2022 which was a 23% increase from 2021. In Lincolnshire, the LA received 1,253 requests for an EHC Needs Assessment which was a 0.08% *decrease* from 2021 and considerably less than the England position.

The number of *new* EHC Plans issued in 2022 increased by 7% nationally whilst in Lincolnshire there was a 1.02% *decrease* in the number of *new* EHC Plans.

For the first time this year, the gender of those issued with *new* EHC Plans was reported; 68.8% of plans in England were issued to males. Whilst a more detailed analysis is required of Lincolnshire's *new* EHC Plans, males account for 70.4% of all pupils reported in the SEN2 data submission for 2022.

Source: [Education, health and care plans, Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

In Lincolnshire, 546 EHC Plans were ended in 2022, which is a decrease from 2021 when 581 Plans were ended:

- 353 Plans ended because pupils left education (298 in 2021)
- 168 transferred to another LA or there was another reason for ceasing the Plan e.g. child died. The comparison is 250 in 2021.
- 22 Plans ended because special needs could be met without an EHC Plan (33 in 2021)
- 3 Plans were ceased because the learner reached the maximum age for an EHC Plan (not previously reported)

Timescales

Lincolnshire has, for several years since the introduction of the SEND reforms had an excellent track record for completion of EHC Needs Assessments within the 20-week timescale. There was a significant drop in 2020 whilst the teams managed a backlog of assessments which had been delayed due to limited numbers of Educational Psychologists. This matter was resolved towards the end of 2020. There was a slight drop in performance in 2022 but still remains very high compared to England as a whole.

- 2018 – 91.9% (England 60.1%)
- 2019 – 74.8% (England 60.4%)
- 2020 – 40.3% (England 58%)
- 2021 – 94.5% (England 59.9%)
- 2022 – 93.6% (England 50.7%)

High Needs Funding Analysis:

Mainstream and placements in other local authority schools

All EHC Plans have been issued in accordance with the evidence provided by schools and other contributing agencies.

The table below highlights the total funding allocated over the last seven years for learners with high level needs who attend mainstream schools and academies.

Financial Year	Top Up Funding	Targeted	Recoupment	Total
2022/23	£26,590,743	£3,035,205	£1,733,525	£31,359,473
2021/22	£22,091,684	£2,709,290	£1,701,071	£26,502,045
2020/21	£16,928,270	£7,433,005	£1,345,259	£25,706,534
2019/20	£12,766,085	£4,260,363	£735,890	£17,762,338
2018/19	£10,879,853	£3,098,854	£608,723	£14,587,430
2017/18	£9,836,695	£2,157,214	£542,519	£12,536,428
2016/17	£9,035,094	£1,721,191	£311,437	£11,067,722

Source: SEND data management/financial system.

The funding in the table is the additional funding above the notional SEN funding of £6,000 held within schools' delegated budgets for low level, high incidence SEN support and the first £6,000 of SEN support for those higher needs learners.

In 2022/23, the authority reviewed the top-up and targeted arrangements for mainstream schools, increasing the hourly rate for which top-up is funded from £11.35 to £11.72, a 3.26% increase. Following a similar review in 2023/24, a further 1% increase has now been agreed from £11.72 to £11.84.

The authority continued to use targeted funding as an approach to supporting schools with a disproportionate number of pupils with more complex needs, using the actual amount of notional SEN determined through the schools national funding formula to identify whether a school has sufficient notional SEN funding to support pupils with EHC Plans at their school. Where a school's notional funding EHC requirements exceed the value that is equivalent to 30% of the notional SEN in their original Budget Share, schools will trigger additional funding. No amendments have been made in 2023/24 with regards to the local arrangement of targeted funding.

The Government consultation outcomes from 'Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula' received LA support to establish an indicative SEND budget through the National Funding Formula, rather than being determined locally. The Department continue to think it is helpful to identify for each school an indicative budget as a guide to the resources that might be needed by a school in supporting its pupils with SEND. The Department has set out in its the recent SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan that it will be developing a new National Standards for SEND and alternative provision, and the

Department intends to engage with the sector on the design of the indicative SEND budget. It is presently unclear of the Department's timescales, but in the meantime, they have provided further guidance to LAs to drive consistency.

Special Schools

Commissioned places for 2023/24 across the special schools' sector is now 2,224, an increase of 96 from the previous year.

Special School funding for 2023/24 through the DSG has increased by £2.158m to £37.143m from 2022/23 original delegated funding. A funding formula review took place in readiness for the 2023/24 financial year with refinements made to ensure it responds to the changing landscape of needs. The key changes were as follows:

- Band monetary values increased by 3% to reflect a rise in current prices.
- Staffing block and non-staffing blocks also included a 3% increase.
- Through the above changes for 2023/24, the Local Authority has ensured that the in-year supplementary allocations made to special schools in 2022/23 have now been factored into the formula going forward.
- To further support costs in 2023/24, Local Authorities were required to allocate an amount that is equivalent to 3.4% of the estimated total grant funding of the school.

Commissioned arrangements also exist within special schools for delivering specialist outreach support including Portage and residential placements. This cost has remained at £1.612m in 2023/24. On occasions, the LA can also agree to additional exceptional funding arrangements (if suitable evidence is provided by the school), as well as commissioned therapy resources. Both these elements sit outside the main special schools funding formula, but the authority has increased the 2023/24 budget provision for them to £0.450m and £0.110m respectively (a total increase of £0.255m).

Engagement with the special school sector is already underway to review the current formula and ensure that any further unforeseen cost pressures facing the delivery of high needs education and support are determined and quantified in preparation for the 2024/25 budget shares.

Independent Non-Maintained Specialist Provision and Independent School placements in Lincolnshire

Between these two budgets, the total costs in 2022/23 were £16.779m; an increase of £2.646m from 2021/22 (£14.133m). There was also a further £1.112m spent on the ongoing costs relating to the 60 commissioned placements for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. For 2023/24, there has recently been a further agreement to commission another 57 pupils.

Supplementary report in autumn 2023

This report will be updated in the autumn to include the comparative data that is usually reported in the summer term's Annual SEND Report. This will include population data on

SEND; a more detailed analysis of pupils receiving *new* EHC Plans; information on primary need; breakdown of SEND data by district; educational placements; outcomes for children and young people with SEND; families' experience of the system (mediation and tribunals); school absence and exclusions. It will also provide an overview of the impact of activities taking place to ensure that children and young people with SEND receive support at the earliest opportunity to avoid their needs escalating and to ensure they are supported in the right place at the right time.

Conclusion

This scaled down report illustrates the impact of the concerted efforts being made across the SEND partnership to ensure that EHC Plans are provided for the children who need higher levels of support. Lincolnshire is bucking the national trend in relation to the growth in the number of EHC Plans, requests for assessment and the number of new EHC Plans issued in 2022. Nevertheless, the cost of support for young people with EHC Plans continues to rise significantly.

The supplementary report, to be provided in the autumn, will provide a more detailed analysis of those who have EHC Plans, where they receive support, their experience in education and their outcomes.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

The SEND High Needs Partnership Board is governing the transformation process and its key work streams, including monitoring of progress against the ambitions. It is chaired by the Assistant Director of Education. Officer membership from key disciplines report to the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Children's Services. A risk log is maintained by the Board with its risk level scored and actions, activities and controls outlined with timescales.

Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum
Date:	29 June 2023
Subject:	Early Years Annual Report

Summary:

This report is to provide the forum with:

- An update on the support provided to the early years and childcare sector in Lincolnshire during 2022-23.
- Outline the priorities for the service during 2023-24.

Recommendation(s):

The forum is asked to:

- Note the content of the report.
- Agree the priorities for 2023-24.

Background

Early Years and Childcare Support (EYCC) provides information, support, challenge, and training opportunities to all early years and childcare providers within Lincolnshire. This includes Academies, Schools, Private, Voluntary, and independent providers, Registered Childminders and Out of School Clubs. For the benefit of this report, these will be referred to as "providers".

Early Years and Childcare Support offers providers access to effective support to deliver the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework and ensure there is sufficient provision available for families in Lincolnshire. This support enables providers to effectively meet the needs of children and has a particular emphasis on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families, to reduce inequalities in child development and promote the school readiness agenda.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) early years block funding supports 2-, 3- and 4-year-old provision. The total budget for 3- & 4-year-olds in 2023-24 is indicative and this has been calculated at £37.089m which includes additional funding for 30 hours. Centrally retained funding for direct early years services is £1.627m during 2023-24, which represents 4.39% of the budget allocation.

The centrally retained budget is utilised to provide a range of support services to the early years and childcare sector, as described within this report.

Early Years and Childcare Support has responsibility for six key areas within Children's Services. These are:

1. Funding and delivery of the Early Years Entitlements for 2-, 3- & 4-Year-Olds
2. Provision of sufficient and sustainable early years and childcare provision for children aged 0-14 years (18 years for those with SEND)
3. Delivery of quality provision and educational outcomes for children (within the EYFS framework)
4. Professional development and workforce training in the early years and childcare sector
5. Inclusion funding and SEN advice and support
6. Partnership working in relation to school readiness including health and the quality and delivery of Children's Centres

Lincolnshire has a diverse marketplace, made up of 826 Ofsted registered childcare providers, including registered childminders, private, voluntary and independent group-based provision and early years provision delivered by schools and academies.

The childcare provision in Lincolnshire allows working families to access full day care for children aged 0-5 years, with 600 providers offering the Early Years Entitlements (EYE) 15 hours or 30 hours for eligible 2-, 3- & 4-year-olds, 66 non-funded childminders, 100 schools and academies delivering some form of out of school care and 60 private or voluntary providers delivering provision for school aged children up to 14 years (18 years for children with a Special Educational Need or Disability).

Following the EYCC annual report to Lincolnshire's Schools' Forum in June 2022, the service identified key priorities for the last academic year. With the aim to drive forward plans for the Family Hubs Programme and key reforms to service collaboration to ensure we are delivering the best possible outcomes for children and families in Lincolnshire.

Updates on the key priorities in the Early Years and Childcare Support Service in 2022-23:

1. Increase take-up of Early Years Entitlement places through effective outreach activities

Evidence shows that attending high quality early education has a lasting impact on social and behavioural outcomes of young children. The entitlements make childcare more accessible and affordable for families and enables them to access training, work or increase their working hours if they wish to do so.

By May 2023, 81% of the total eligible 2-year-olds are accessing childcare places in Lincolnshire. This is above the national average and outreach activities are being targeted

at areas with lower take-up, to support families and identify if sufficient childcare is available to meet the needs of families.

Extensive marketing is being disseminated. A dedicated outreach officer within the Early Years team is actively engaging with locality teams, other professionals and attending events across Lincolnshire to reach families and inform them of the Government offers. From the recent parent survey, 54% of families said they were unaware of the benefits of Tax-Free Childcare. There will be a continued priority to support the dissemination of information regarding Government offers and is engaging with other professionals to ensure parents are encouraged to access childcare provision.

All 3- and 4-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours a week of free early learning. Take-up was at 90% nationally in 2022 and take-up in Lincolnshire was at 92%. The Early Years and Childcare Support team has been working in collaboration with locality teams, health visitors, childcare providers and a wide variety of partners to share data to encourage families to access their entitlements and improve take-up. There is a continued commitment to ensure that funded early education is available to support the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds in Lincolnshire and further collaborative work is on-going to encourage children into places at the earliest opportunity.

2. Review the sufficiency of childcare provision across Lincolnshire and implement a strategy for supporting the future sustainability of the marketplace

The annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) has been completed for 2023 and data is currently being validated to understand the current market position.

Following the review in 2022, a childcare delivery plan was developed and schools forum approved the local authorities request to convert £0.780m from Dedicated Schools Grant reserves, to invest in the development of new childcare places in areas across Lincolnshire with a sufficiency deficit.

A Disapplication Request was submitted to the DfE for Secretary of State (SoS) approval. The Local Authority has successfully received approval for this conversion and launched the capital grant programme in May 2023.

A parent survey has just completed, hosted on the Let's talk Lincolnshire online platform. A record 1,893 responses were received through this platform. This is a 22% increase from last year and the most respondents to any LCC survey, showing that parents want to be heard.

The responses from Boston was low, however 35% of the respondents from this area said they were unable to access the childcare they needed. We had a an expected response from South Holland with 39% of parents saying they could not access the provision they need.

Further analysis is needed on this, however initial analysis shows that in all areas parents are finding it difficult to access wrap around a care, this includes breakfast clubs,

afterschool and holiday clubs for school aged children. The predominant reasons for being unable to access childcare being cost and no places locally.

Capital funding will support the development of early years places and we hope the new Government announcements will support Lincolnshire to increase wraparound provision for school aged children.

As part of a package of reforms to early years and childcare, the government announced an investment of £289m over two academic years, from September 2024, to support local authorities to work with schools, trusts and other providers to set up and scale up wraparound childcare provision. This is the first step in the government's ambition for all parents of primary school children who need it to access childcare in their local area from 8am – 6pm.

3. Embed the effective working groups to deliver outcomes identified in the Early Childhood Strategy

This has been superseded by the Family Hubs Programme and Start for Life offer. The working groups have been adapted to ensure these follow the workstreams within the DfE delivery plan for the programme. The Early Childhood Strategy will be developed this coming year to develop this into our Start for Life Strategy. The working groups will contribute to the review of this strategy, including all partners in the review. The governance board will be responsible for signing this off and a final version will be presented to the schools forum next year.

4. Work in partnership with the early years sector to develop and maintain high quality and inclusive education provision

At the beginning of the year Ofsted gradings for early years settings were becoming a growing concern with higher numbers of settings being graded as inadequate than previously seen. EYCC undertook a review of how the safeguarding and welfare requirements are supported in settings and implemented a relational based offer of visits to all settings who were due an inspection in the current cycle. So far those that have since been inspected who have taken up the offer of a visit have achieved a Good rating from Ofsted. The approach has been shared with key colleagues who support the EY sector to ensure there is consistency.

The sector was consulted with on what their worries and concerns were regarding their upcoming inspection and over 100 providers attended sessions to help shape a CPD opportunity. In June, countywide face to face Ofsted Inspection seminars were held based on needs identified by the sector. Approximately 80 practitioners attended from a range of provider types there was positive feedback with the majority of providers telling us they felt more confident following the seminar.

Lincolnshire EYCC was successful in securing a place on a NASEN/DfE funded project for 4 Local Authorities. The project focussed on a whole setting approach to SEND and 15 Lincolnshire setting SENCOs took part and conducted SEND reviews in their setting.

EYCC also trialled partnering with 5 Outstanding Providers to work alongside aspiring settings to achieve at least a good outcome at their next inspection.

EYCC hold termly early years SENCo network, to make these more interactive and to capture the knowledge and experience of the sector, solution circles have been introduced with the support of the LA Practice Advisers from the Quality and Standards team. These are now embedded in the termly sessions so that SENCos can offer advice and guidance to their peers.

In February this year EYCC was also successful in securing an opportunity to work with the National Children's bureau on a small DfE funded project to improve the provision and support for the Home Learning Environment for young children with SEND in the area. This comprised training sessions for both practitioners and parents and we were delighted to be able to involve the Lincolnshire parent Carer Forum in this opportunity.

5. Analyse the GLD from 2022 EYFS profile data and produce a set of targets based on improving children's development outcomes

The GLD this year showed that nationally and locally there was a significant dip in outcomes since 2019. Lincolnshire GLD was 64.1% whilst the National GLD was 65.2% - whilst Lincolnshire remained below national, the gap had narrowed. Data analysed at a district level outlined where some areas had lower outcomes in their GLD and this information has helped inform priority areas linked to the placement of Family Hubs networks.

Lincolnshire as performed better than national in the communication and language goals, however it underperformed in goals linked to self – regulation. This has helped inform what programmes need to be focussed on when looking at the Family Hubs delivery model for Lincolnshire.

Where schools have had significantly lower GLD than national, EYCC has put in a package of support around developing a locality early years network of settings and partner agencies, there are currently 8 of these locality networks in place this year and their outcomes at GLD will be closely monitored. The focus of these networks is around building strong transitions and prioritising school readiness. Updates on these have been shared at the Headteacher briefings throughout the year.

The 2022 EYFS Profile Data was unpredictable following 2 years of assessment disapplication due to pandemic restrictions, a reformed EYFS and new Profile Assessment was launched in 2021 with changes to the early learning goals. There was also uncertainty over the impact of the pandemic lockdowns on children's learning and development, this will need to be closely monitored as we see children who were born in the pandemic move through their early years education.

6. Provide CPD for the sector with a focus on programmes and activities that improve early language and communication including supporting staff to acquire the skills

to enhance children's early language development. SEN Level 2 and Level 3 to enable staff to support those children with the greatest need

Early years providers tell us that increasing numbers of children are presenting at their settings with additional needs and that they are struggling to meet need. EYCC are seeing rising numbers of applications for Inclusion funding and we know that there are rising numbers of younger children for whom Education Health and Care plans are being requested. The most effective resource any setting has is its staff, EYCC has reviewed the CPD offer for SENCOs in EY settings and developed a pathway with new training opportunities including L3 SENCO Award for Early years for current SENCOs, L2 SEND training for aspiring or secondary SENCOs. From 2022 -2023, 50 early years SENCOs have completed the L3 SENCO award by Certsey. Over 100 aspiring SENCOs have been trained in the L2 SENCO award delivered by Liverpool School Improvement.

In 2022-23 EYCC worked in partnership with the DfE to deliver a communication-based programme of CPD to the sector bespoke to Lincolnshire. Over 45 practitioners were trained in ELKLAN, communication friendly spaces and provided with Wellcomm resources to enable them to track children's language and provide targeted support based on need.

EYCC continues to source LSCP training for providers through the Lincolnshire LSCP, in order that settings can meet their requirements under the EYFS. Other mandatory training such as First Aid and Food Hygiene is also secured for the sector. Local and national information shows that the sector need support in developing resilience and managers are needing support to manage the mental health needs of the sector (the Early years Alliance has identified high numbers of practitioners within the sector who are struggling with their mental health [Mental health and the early years workforce | early years alliance \(eyalliance.org.uk\)](https://www.evalliance.org.uk)) EYCC has sourced training to support managers and provide some opportunities for practitioners to build their resilience and self-esteem. Networks and briefings are returning to face to face, however a high number of practitioners are telling us they prefer the online offer for ease of accessibility.

EYCC liaises with the DfE in the roll out and promotion of the DfE COVID recovery programmes which is providing more CPD into the sector including:

- Stronger Practice Hubs: (Pen Green) East Midlands provider offering research-based programmes and linking with local areas to establish needs of the sector
- DfE Online Child Development Tool
- Experts and Mentors (Settings): A peer support programme, the local Area Lead for this is Amy Stancer St Giles Nursery
- Leads and Mentors (Childminders): A Peer Support programme 5 Lincolnshire mentors – 2 of whom are EYCC colleagues.
- L3 SENCO Award : Delivered by Best Practice Network online training 5000 places nationally, Lincolnshire SENCOs have secured 25 places

7. Develop the specification in conjunction with commissioning for the Best Start service

The service specification has been developed and agreed and fits within the vision for a child's first 1,001 days which is a unique period, setting the foundations for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing. The new service specification has been in place since April this year and is monitored through contract board meetings.

8. Review the quality assurance system for Children Centres to enable localities to produce clear action plans based on analysis of data by working collaboratively with the central team

The quality and assurance for CC is delivered in partnership with other services through learning walks. The learning walks take a restorative approach to identify what's working well, what are we worried about and what needs to happen. The learning walks are linked to the data sets and action plans for each centre to ensure there is a robust approach to planning.

9. Refresh the quality assurance pathways to reflect the new commissioned service.

There is a workstream in place to link the quality and assurance for commissioned services (within Children's Centres) to the overall quality and assurance plan.

10. Self-evaluate our early years' service against minimum and go further standards within the Family Hubs against the draft service specification.

The local authority has completed a rigorous process with the Department for Education, to agree an appropriate delivery plan for the Family Hubs programme. This encapsulates the minimum and go further standards required to meet the expectations of the 3-year programme and uses evidence-based research to inform the training and support packages that will be delivered to staff and families in Lincolnshire.

The core project team has identified costs associated with all areas of the programme and carefully considered funding that will be dedicated to rolling out the programme successfully.

A detailed analysis of the services already offered in our 48 Children's Centres has been completed in the spring term 2023. This identified that Lincolnshire is already meeting 75% of the required standards in the Family Hubs programme. We intend to build upon these further in the next year.

11. Draw together an action plan to measure successes against standards and implement these through the working groups under the steering group.

Two quality and data tools are being used to report to the DfE. A Maturity Self-Assessment and Management Information template is used to gather data and have set the benchmark for where Lincolnshire currently sits within the workstream areas. Individual action plans have been developed under each workstream as part of the Family Hubs programme and these are updated frequently and reviewed by the Governance Board.

The overall delivery plan and progress is being updated and reported monthly to the DfE and progress is monitored regularly.

12. Implement key areas and publish Lincolnshire's Start for Life offer

Lincolnshire's Start for Life Offer has been published and a virtual website space is now live www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/startforlife. A briefing paper to outline the Start for Life offer has been created and shared with stakeholders. Brand Guidelines and a detailed communications plan has been developed and is being used across the core project team. Launch events have been organised at the 10 Children's Centre sites identified as Family Hub sites. Flyers, posters, banners etc and various marketing information has been developed to ensure a succession of marketing can now start to be completed in Lincolnshire. Bus adverts, radio announcements, magazine articles and various materials have been designed and will be published shortly.

Conclusion

Priorities identified for the Early Years and Childcare Support service for 2023-24 includes:

1. Spring budget announcements. In the [Spring Budget](#), the Chancellor announced the single biggest investment in childcare in England ever, including expansion of childcare support for working parents to include children from 9 months old up to school age, and changes to Universal Credit childcare payments. This will be a focus for the Sustainability & Development Team in the coming years, to ensure the new entitlements are rolled out successfully in Lincolnshire.
2. Team structure to meet demands. Early Years and Childcare will need to complete a scoping exercise to fully understand the demands of the service, with the introduction of the new Government entitlements, and developing new childcare to support the national expectations to introduce or expand childcare provision on either side of the school day from 8am – 6pm.
3. Start for Life Strategy. The existing Early Childhood Strategy will be reviewed and developed to ensure this strategy is developed in collaboration with all partners involved in the Family Hubs programme and Start for Life offer.
4. CPD around 0-2 years. There will be a need to invest in the development of the workforce in EYCC and localities to support the 1,001 critical days and Lincolnshire's Start for Life offer.
5. SEN & Communication – The need for a stronger qualified workforce to meet the needs of children with SEND and communication needs is key. There will need to be investment in CPD in these areas. There will need to be a refocus into preventative work at an earlier stage through quality, safeguarding and inclusion teams.
6. Consideration will be made on the use of the Early Years block underspend identified from 2022-23 (£0.800m), to support the sector to deliver better outcomes for our children in Lincolnshire. Of this sum, £0.200m had been earmarked against the fluctuation contingency fund for 3- and 4-year-olds in 2023/24, as the Local Authority looked to maximise the hourly rate to providers.

Consideration will be made in the October Schools' Forum Revised Budgets report on the use of the underspend.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

There has been an increase in the number of providers with a less than good outcome at inspection, many of the settings being inspected are those who have not been seen by Ofsted since 2017 due to the impact of the pandemic restrictions. Many of those providers have been found inadequate or requires improvement as they have not met the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS 2021.

A higher than usual number of providers were graded Inadequate at their inspection in the first part of 2023. Early Years and Childcare reviewed the data and considered whether any learning could be carried out. After careful consideration, all providers most likely to be inspected sooner on the Ofsted cycle were offered a face-to-face learning walk visit. In addition, approximately 80 providers have booked to attend events taking place in the summer term 2023 to support Ofsted readiness. Since these actions have been implemented, the rate of providers being graded as inadequate has slowed.

In line with statutory duties (Childcare Act 2006 Section 13), Lincolnshire Early years and Childcare (EYCC) currently provides targeted support to those providers awaiting their first inspection or those with a less than good inspection outcome. There is a universal offer of guidance and advice through training, networks and forums for all other providers. The support offer encompasses Learning & Development and safeguarding & Welfare.

There is a need for more preventative and early intervention support for settings to slow the increase in the number of settings achieving a less than good outcome and more than that ensure that Lincolnshire children are safe and healthy as they access their funded 2, 3- and 4-year-old entitlement. There is a need for early years and childcare settings to have regular face to face visits to ensure that children are being safeguarded and protected.

There is a need to increase the level of funding paid to the childcare sector, to secure the provision long-term and deliver the new Government entitlements. The Government recognise the pressure the sector has been under so a funding uplift from September 2023 will restore rates for 3- and 4-year-olds to meet cost pressures the sector is facing and provide a substantial uplift to 2-year-old rates. This sits on top of funding uplifts already shared with the forum for 2023-24 in the January 2023 meeting.

Further investment will be required to develop sufficient wraparound childcare for school aged children across Lincolnshire. The Early Years and Childcare Support team will actively participate in Government led initiatives to support this agenda.

Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Early Years Funding Formula January 2023	https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=166&MId=8503&Ver=4
Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare-2

This report was written by Nicky Myers, who can be contacted on 01522 552752 or nicky.myers@lincolnshire.gov.uk



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to: **Lincolnshire Schools' Forum**

Date: **29 June 2023**

Subject: **Portage Service**

Summary:

The purpose of the report is to:

1. Provide an overview of the findings from the review of the Portage Service.
2. Seek support from the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum on the recommendation to re-commission a Portage Service and to continue its funding from the High Needs Block of the Designated Schools Grant.

Recommendation(s):

Lincolnshire Schools' Forum is asked to note the content of the report and to support the recommendation to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration to continue to fund a Portage Service from the High Needs Block of the Designated Schools Grant.

Background

Since the 1990s, Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Services has commissioned a Portage Service; provided by Lincolnshire special schools who use their expertise to provide Portage support and prepare eligible children for school.

The Portage Service is predominantly a home visiting support service for children in their early years up to the age of five years with suspected or diagnosed special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families, where there is a learning difficulty, developmental delay or physical difficulty that is impacting on the child's educational development.

The Portage Service is delivered during term time and since 2015 has been commissioned through Memorandum of Understandings¹ (MOUs); these MOUs are renewed annually and currently include the following special schools:

¹ MOUs support close partnership working with schools and are agreements that formally set out what each partner is delivering, committed resources, governance and expected benefits. Whilst not legally binding the MOUs are statements of serious intent that are agreed voluntarily.

Special School Provider	Coverage	Annual Funding Allocation
Lincoln St Christopher's School	Lincoln	£35,258
Sandon School (Grantham)	North Kesteven	£35,258
Willoughby Academy (Bourne)	South Kesteven	£35,258
St Bernard's School (Louth)	East and West Lindsey	£70,516*
St Lawrence School (Horncastle)	East Lindsey	£35,258
Eresby Special School (Spilsby)	East Lindsey	£35,258
Boston Endeavour Academy (previously known as Boston John Fielding Special School)	Boston	£35,258
Tulip Academy (Spalding) (previously known as The Garth School)	South Holland	£35,258

*Higher funding as covers both East and West Lindsey.

The current combined overall annual value for Portage is currently £317,322 which is funded through the High Needs Block of the Designated schools Grant (DSG). The current MOU arrangements will end on 31st March 2024 and a review of the Portage Service has been undertaken in view of changes to other relevant early years services and new national and local priorities, e.g. Family Hubs, to determine how a Portage Service may best work in the future.

A review of the Portage Service has concluded and the Portage Service's interdependencies with other relevant services that support the educational development of children in their early years has also been considered. These include:

- The Health Visiting Service within the Children's Health Service 0-19;
- The Best Start Lincolnshire: Early Years and Family Service (which has recently been re-commissioned and includes greater partnership working with other relevant services to ensure a more inclusive offer for all children in their early years with SEND within children's centres / Family Hubs and wider community venues), and,
- Family Hubs (a government funded initiative to provide high-quality, joined up, whole family support services within local communities with a strong focus on a start for life offer).

Statutory Duties

The Council has no explicit statutory duty to provide a Portage Service, however, the Portage Service supports the Council's statutory duties outlined below:

- **Section 17 (1)** of the **Children Act 1989** imposes a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area, including providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.
- The **Children and Families Act 2014** sets out the general principles and duties on local authorities and health bodies to work in partnership when commissioning provision for children, including children with SEND. This includes supporting children with their development and helping them to achieve the "best possible educational and other outcomes". **Part 3** of the Children and Families Act 2014 specifically relates to children with SEND.
- The **Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, 2015** sets out the legal requirements that must be followed and explains the duties of

local authorities, health bodies, schools and colleges under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

- **Section 5.13** states that some children need support for SEN and disabilities at home or in informal settings before, or as well as, the support they receive from an early years provider.
- **Section 5.16** identifies that support can take a number of forms, including home-based programmes such as Portage.
- The **Equality Act 2010** sets out the statutory duties for all public bodies to ensure they play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination, equality of opportunity for all and fostering good relations.
- **Section 3(2) of the Childcare Act 2006** sets out the Local Authority’s statutory responsibilities to make arrangements to secure integrated early childhood services and maximise the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children. In addition, **Section 1** of the Childcare act 2006, places a duty on local authorities to improve the wellbeing of young children in their area and reduce inequalities between them.

Needs Summary

- The Lincolnshire early years population is decreasing, however, of this population there is a rise in children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) (6% in 2021; above the national average of 4%).
- There are high numbers of children presenting with social, language and communication needs (SLCN) (SLCN is the third highest primary need for Lincolnshire children with SEND).
- 207 children aged 0 to six were referred by Health Visitors for Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) (July to September 2022). There was a 64% increase in referrals to SALT in 2022 (5,254 referrals) compared to 2019. 76% of referrals were for children aged 0 to five years.
- Of Lincolnshire’s population 6.5% live in the 10% most deprived areas in the county.
- Lincolnshire is below the regional and national averages for Good Level of Development (GLD) of all foundation stage pupils, including pupils with SEN.

		2016	2017	2018	2019
GLD Foundation Stage FSM Eligible Children	England	54%	56%	56.6%	57%
	East Midlands	52%	52%	54%	55%
	Statistical Neighbours	52.6%	52.8%	54.2%	53%
	Lincolnshire	54.1%	52.8%	52.4%	56%
	GLD Foundation Stage All Other Children	England	72%	73%	73.8%
	East Midlands	67.6%	68.8%	69.8%	70.3%
	Statistical Neighbours	71.8%	72.6%	73.1%	74%
	Lincolnshire	73.3%	72.6%	72.1%	72%
GLD Foundation Stage SEN Pupils without EHCP	England	26%	27%	28%	29%
	East Midlands	26%	26%	26%	26%
	Statistical Neighbours	26.56%	26%	26%	26.89%
	Lincolnshire	27%	25%	24%	25%
GLD Foundation Stage SEN	England	4%	4%	5%	5%

Pupils with an EHCP	East Midlands	4%	3%	4%	4%
	Statistical Neighbours	7.25%	5.4%	4.56%	4.11%
	Lincolnshire	6%	Not available	5%	2%

*Performance: red- worse than all or majority of comparators, amber- on a par with all or majority comparators, green- better than all or majority of comparators.

Evidence Summary

- Evidence is clear that good parenting during the first 1001 days of a child's life can have a significant positive impact on their life chances.
- It is important to increase parents knowledge of the importance of early childhood development.
- Children doing less well at age five are more likely to be excluded from school.
- Integrated working between professionals has many benefits including reducing the word gap for children, improving cognitive development, physical health and behaviour, supporting parent/child interactions and reducing duplication and costs.
- Co-ordinated multi-agency early support for young children with SEND, and their parents/carers, can improve their outcomes and life chances.

Portage Service Performance September 2021 to end of July 2022

- The intention of the Service is to build the resilience and skills of families, empowering them to meet their child's needs without the need for more specialist provision.
- Referrals go directly to each of the different Portage providers based on where the child lives and come from a wide range of professionals. There are different referral forms for each of the Portage providers.
- All providers follow the National Portage Association² (NPA) framework (recommends that a full-time Portage Worker holds a maximum caseload of c. 16 to 17 cases at any one time). Some Portage Workers in Lincolnshire are trained to NPA standards and offer accredited NPA workshops to other early years professionals and settings (not part of the MOU arrangement and is a traded offer from those providers that have NPA trained Portage Workers).
- There is an inequity of provision across the county, with variations of delivery across the providers. Since 2021 the MOU has sought to standardise the offer as far as possible.
- Demand for Portage varies across the county, but in areas where demand is high, caseloads are above the NPA recommendation for Portage Workers.

School	Coverage	Average FTE of Portage Worker	Number of referrals carried over from end of 20/21 AY	Number on caseload at start of 21/22 AY
Boston Endeavour Academy	Boston	1 FTE	0	11
Eresby Special School	East Lindsey	1 FTE	4	26

² The National Portage Association is a registered national charity which supports Portage services, families and professionals and provides a Code of Practice and framework for Portage services to work to. The NPA framework states that each home visit must include structured teaching for the child with clear goals and time to support the parent/carer.

Tulip Academy	South Holland	1 FTE	10	22
Lincoln St Christopher's	Lincoln	1 FTE	39	22
Sandon Special School	North Kesteven	1 FTE	5	20
St Bernard's School	East and West Lindsey	1 FTE	23 (7 for East Lindsey and 16 for West Lindsey)	41 (24 for East Lindsey and 17 for West Lindsey)
St Lawrence School	East Lindsey	1 FTE	3	12
Willoughby Academy	South Kesteven	0.7 FTE*	13	17
Total			97	171

*0.3 FTE is attributed to portage coordination support through senior leadership within the academy.

Red – more than the recommended NPA caseload, amber – on par with recommended NPA caseload, green – less than the recommended NPA caseload

- Across all Portage providers, referrals between 2018/19 and 2021/22 academic years were as follows:

2018/19 AY	2019/20 AY	2020/21 AY	2021/22 AY
213	189 (-11%)	284 (+50%)	270 (-4%)
% Accepted n/a	94% accepted	82% accepted	94% accepted

- Suspected autism, social communication and interaction and suspected global developmental delay are the top three reasons for referral.
- There is an inequity of provision across the county; for some families where demand is high, they are having to wait six months or more before Portage support commences. In Lincoln, where demand is the highest, a small number of children did not receive any support before commencing nursery or their Reception Year.
- More children who are in receipt of Portage support are being discharged sooner, with the large majority accessing mainstream school, nursery settings or no further support required.
- There is an inequity of service provision across the county, with some children and their families offered weekly visits whereas others are offered fortnightly.
- The total number of children supported, on the caseload and still waiting for support at the end of the 2021/22 academic year differs in each area of the county, depending upon demand.

School	Coverage	Total number of children supported	Number on caseload at end of 21/22 AY	Number of referrals waiting for support as at end of AY
Boston Endeavour Academy	Boston	26	7	3
Eresby Special School	East Lindsey	31	17	7
Tulip Academy	South Holland	45	23	12
Lincoln St Christopher's	Lincoln	65	21	50
Sandon Special School	North Kesteven	79	23	1
St Bernard's School	East and West Lindsey	81 (36 for East Lindsey and 45 for West Lindsey)	35 (17 for East Lindsey and 18 for West Lindsey)	4
St Lawrence School	East Lindsey	36	13	6
Willoughby Academy	South Kesteven	36	14	2
Total		399*	153*	85

*NB: children and families can be added onto the caseload throughout an academic year.

- All providers are rated at least good for performance.
- 48% of children on the caseload were ages three to five years, all of whom will have been entitled to access their three and four year old early years entitlement funding.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Case mapping and stakeholder engagement identified that service users that accessed the Service highly valued the support provided, especially families who found it difficult to travel.
- There were some examples of positive multi-agency working.
- There was evidence of some inappropriate referrals, including referrals where there was not an identified SEND need. There needs to be a more integrated approach between the Portage Service and the Council's in-house and commissioned early years services to ensure there is a more seamless pathway between services for families.
- Evidence of inconsistencies across the different providers in the processing of referrals, meaning waiting times varied across Portage providers; some families who really needed support were not able to access it in a timely manner.
- There were some inconsistencies in the type and level of support provided, especially where there were high levels of demand for Portage Support. There was some evidence of holding onto cases, even though ongoing support was not needed.
- Many families felt their child was able to engage better with support because this was being provided in the home.
- Many families who were able to access support felt that Portage had improved their child's development and had supported families to better understand their child's developmental needs and how to support their needs within the home.
- Families commented that Portage Workers were one of the few consistent professionals within their lives.
- A stronger and more inclusive offer within the local community, e.g. children's centres/Family Hubs is needed so that more young children with SEND where there is a learning difficulty, developmental delay or physical difficulty, and their families, can be supported sooner with their educational development, thus reducing the need for home visiting support.
- More partnership working is needed between any future Portage Service, the Council's early years teams and commissioned early years services, e.g. Best Start Lincolnshire.
- The need for a more equitable Portage offer across the county was highlighted by a wide range of professionals.
- There is a perceived duplication between the Portage Worker role and some other roles within the Council, e.g. Early Years Specialist Teachers.

Recommended Model

A future Portage Service would benefit from being led by a single provider to deliver a consistent countywide service that ensures staffing and funding resources are needs-led with a single point of access for referrals.

The Service should continue to be delivered during term time, and continue to support children in their early years up to the age of five years with suspected or diagnosed special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and their families, where there is a learning difficulty, developmental delay or physical difficulty that is impacting on the child's educational development.

There will be a strong emphasis on Portage capacity being aligned to areas of demand; this may mean more workers in some areas and less in others, but this will ensure an equitable offer for all eligible families across the county.

The Service should continue to align to the NPA Code of Practice (child-led play, family focused; structured teaching) in relation to the delivery of home-based support and criteria for accessing Portage support. The Service will also be better aligned to local priorities and will be expected to adapt its offer accordingly as relevant priorities for the Council develop and embed, e.g. Early Childhood Strategy, Family Hubs.

The Service will be expected to work in partnership with the Council to help develop pathways with other in-house and commissioned services to ensure eligible children, and their parents/carers, access the right support, at the right time and by the right professional.

Referrals will be via a single point of access managed by the lead provider, with robust consistent criteria for referral and robust partnership working between the Service, Health Visitors and other relevant services (where appropriate) to ensure eligible children receive the right support at the right time and by the right professional.

Group Support/Workshops/One to One support

Group support/workshops and bookable one to one support will be a strong focus for the Service offer delivered in partnership with the Best Start Lincolnshire: Early Years and Family Service and Early Support Learning Provision (where appropriate) within local children's centres/Family Hubs or other outreach venues.

Portage Home-based Support

Portage home-based support will remain a core offer but will only be accessible where there is an identified need and once the group support and workshop offer has been fully exhausted (unless there is an escalation of need) and/or where a family is unable to travel to a local children's centre or other community venue to access one to one support sooner. Home-based support will follow the NPA Framework and will be time-limited of no more than six months, with a clear exit strategy agreed with families and other relevant professionals. For children in receipt of active home-based support either transitioning into early years settings or their Reception Year, the Portage Worker will offer in setting transition support to an allocated key worker within the setting, alongside the Early Years Specialist Teacher. Where a child is transitioning into their Reception Year this may also include the Autism and Learning Difficulties (ALD) Service (also known as Working Together Team) where relevant and appropriate. Transition support will only be

available for a maximum of six weeks as part of the exit strategy and the frequency of support will be dependent on the needs of the child.

Funding recommendations for a future Portage Service offer

The current funding for a Portage Service is £317,322 per annum and staffing currently includes 8.7FTE of Portage Workers (9 workers) who are employed by the individual Portage providers on different salary scales and different terms and conditions of employment. Funding also includes leadership, management and administration costs associated with Portage. As at end of August 2022, salary costs accounted for approximately 82% of the overall value of the MOUs across all providers.

The average cost for mid-band EHCPs in mainstream schools in 2022/23 was £4,694 and the average cost of a special school placement was £17,265. As evidenced from the IMPOWER review, earlier support for families with young children may prevent, reduce or delay the need for an EHCP.

The assumption for the financial costings for the future recommended Portage Service model has been based on the current cost of the provision, including current pay scales of Portage Workers, but taking into consideration increasing staffing costs and the following:

- The Council’s current Portage Worker job description is evaluated at a GLEA Grade 5 (c. £29,374 to £32,932 full time equivalent including national insurance and pension).
- Portage Worker salary costs currently range from a GLEA Grade 5 to a Grade 8 or equivalent depending on the length of service of the workers (GLEA equivalent £29,374 to £44,656 full time equivalent including national insurance and pension).
- The increase in NJC Local Government pay scales and staffing costs (staffing costs are anticipated to increase to 87% of the overall current funding).
- The Government’s consultation on the fixed 52-week reference point (if this is implemented current staffing costs could increase to 91% of the current funding),
- Some Portage providers are anticipating a small cost pressure of c.£5,000 at the end of August 2023 (work is taking place with the relevant providers to determine whether efficiency savings can be made in order to reduce the cost pressure).
- The need for management and non-staffing costs to be kept to a minimum in order to ensure as much of the budget as possible is attributed to delivery costs.
- To deliver the recommended model there will need to be a level of Portage co-ordination in addition to sufficient Portage Workers to deliver the model.

Whilst staffing models would be at the discretion of the successful provider, it is anticipated that to deliver the new model would initially require 8 Portage Workers and 1 Portage Coordinator, working full-time, term-time only. To provide the recommended model for a future Portage Service the anticipated required funding for each financial year is as follows:

Annual Cost at 39 weeks a year if no change to the annual leave entitlement calculation	Annual cost at 39 weeks a year if Government’s 52-week reference point implemented for part year workers
£356,015	£362,750

Although there is a potential cost pressure of £38,693 per annum (if no change to the annual leave entitlement calculation) against the current funding for Portage, the recommended model is anticipated to improve pathways between relevant services and ensure more children in their early years, and their families, access the right support, at the right time and by the right professional. Thus ensuring only eligible children, and their families, who really need Portage home-visiting support are able to access it, which in time should reduce demand on the Portage Service. Furthermore, there is a need for an equity of pay across all of the Portage Workers, and therefore as vacancies arise from Portage Workers who are currently on a higher pay grade there will be an expectation that vacancies will be reviewed with the Council as the recommended model is embedded and if there is a need to recruit to vacancies, these are advertised and filled at a Grade 5 or equivalent. Therefore, in time, it is anticipated that the cost pressure against the current funding for Portage would reduce as the recommended model is developed and fully embedded.

Conclusion

The Portage Service is a highly regarded Service by those who are able to access it and there is a high demand for Portage support. The financial challenges facing the Council in its management of High Needs budgets mean it is imperative that the right support offer is provided to children in their early years in order to ensure their educational development needs are met reducing the need for more specialist provision. It is anticipated that the recommended future model for a Portage Service will achieve this through the robust partnership working with Health Visitors, the Best Start Lincolnshire: Early Years and Family Service and other relevant services, thus reducing escalating needs and delivering a cost avoidance.

Although the recommended budget for a future Portage Service is higher than the current budget available for Portage, it is anticipated that in time, there will be a reduced demand on the Portage Service home visiting support and more children in their early years will have their educational development needs met through services available within local children's centres/Family Hubs and other community outreach venues.

A recommendation is being made to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration to re-commission a one-provider led Portage Service via an expression of interest process to Lincolnshire special schools within the Lincolnshire SEND Alliance. This could be either an expression of interest from one single provider delivering Portage or a partnership bid with a collaboration of schools working together to deliver Portage, with one provider acting as the lead provider. This will ensure that special school expertise can continue to be utilised to provide Portage support for eligible children in their early years up to the age of five years, and their families, and be ready for school. This will also mean that there can be a strong emphasis on Portage capacity being aligned to areas of demand, ensuring an equitable offer for all eligible families across the county as well as also ensuring eligible young children, and their parents/carers, access the right support.

This would be via a Public-to-Public arrangement via a one provider-led model either through an MOU (if a local authority maintained special school) or a Public-to-Public Collaboration Agreement (if an academy). Public-to-Public Collaboration Agreements are allowed for under Regulation 12(7) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and as such do not need to be subject to a competitive procurement process. The Agreement would be in place from 1st April 2024 for three years initially, with the option to extend for a further two years.

Lincolnshire Schools' Forum is asked to support the recommendation to continue to fund a Portage Service from the High Needs Block of the DSG. The key findings from the review to support the recommendation are summarised below.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Despite significant financial pressure on the High Needs Block of the Designated Schools Grant, the evidence is clear that not to re-commission a Portage Service would likely result in a significant gap in provision and put more pressure on existing services, as well as increased pressure on the High Needs Block of the DSG. In addition, it would likely mean:

- A longer term impact on specialist provision due to the lack of available provision for young children with special educational needs and their families.
- A higher risk of increased pressure on the Council (reputational and financial) in relation to meeting some of its statutory duties outlined in this report.
- Not supporting national and local priorities across health, education and social care to ensure even more young children, and their families, access the right support at the right time.
- More young children being excluded from school due to the risk of them doing less well at age five.
- Even higher numbers of young children starting school with SLCN, putting more pressure on schools and speech and language therapy services in order to meet the needs of young children with SLCN.

Given that the recommended model for a future Portage Service offer is not to reduce the Portage Service offer and to have a greater collaboration between the Portage Service and other relevant services, it is not anticipated that there will be persons negatively impacted on with protected characteristics.

Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Sara Gregory, who can be contacted on 07500074527 or saraj.gregory@lincolnshire.gov.uk.



Open Report on behalf of Martin Smith, Assistant Director for Children's Education

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools' Forum
Date:	29 June 2023
Subject:	Academies and Trust Update

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the latest number of academies and pupils in academies, and academy trusts.

Recommendation(s):

The Schools' Forum is asked to note the contents of this report.

Background

The Schools' Forum asked for an update to be provided to each meeting on the number of academy conversions.

This is the position as at the 1 June 2023. The pupil figures are based on the January 2023 census data (i.e. the latest published). The national academy trust data is the latest available from "Get Information About Schools".

Since the effective date of the last report (1 April 2023) no further schools have converted to academy status.

Current Status of All Lincolnshire State Schools

	Schools		FTE	
Nursery				
All	5		258	
Maintained	5	100.0%	258	100.0%
Academy	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Primary				
All	281		56,811	
Maintained	162	57.7%	26,528	46.7%
Academy	119	42.3%	30,283	53.3%

Secondary				
All	54		49,409	
Maintained	2	3.7%	2,185	4.4%
Academy	52	96.3%	47,224	95.6%
Special				
All	18		2,261	
Maintained	5	27.8%	690	30.5%
Academy	13	72.2%	1,571	69.5%
PRU				
All	5		276	
Maintained	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Academy	5	100.0%	276	100.0%
Total				
All	363		109,015	
Maintained	174	47.9%	29,661	27.2%
Academy	189	52.1%	79,354	72.8%

Since the last report, Wrangle Primary School has applied to become an academy and to join University of Lincoln Academy Trust. Digby Church of England School, Willoughby St Helena's Church of England Primary School, Skegness The Richmond School and Cowbit St Mary's (Endowed) Church of England Primary School are the schools that are required to become academies, but no trusts have yet been allocated.

Projected Six Month Status of All Lincolnshire State Schools

	Schools		FTE	
Nursery				
All	5		258	
Maintained	5	100.0%	258	100.0%
Academy	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Primary				
All	281		56,811	
Maintained	161	57.3%	26,462	46.6%
Academy	120	42.7%	30,349	53.4%
Secondary				
All	54		49,409	
Maintained	2	3.7%	2,185	4.4%
Academy	52	96.3%	47,224	95.6%
Special				
All	18		2,261	
Maintained	5	27.8%	690	30.5%
Academy	13	72.2%	1,571	69.5%

PRU				
All	5		276	
Maintained	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Academy	5	100.0%	276	100.0%
Total				
All	363		109,015	
Maintained	173	47.7%	29,595	27.1%
Academy	190	52.3%	79,420	72.9%

There have been no trust changes since the last report.

	Total	FTE Pupils
1 Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust	15	2752
2 Community Inclusive Trust	12	2130
The Priory Federation of Academies	12	7474
4 Infinity Academies Trust	9	2110
Voyage Education Partnership	9	3836
6 The David Ross Education Trust	8	2743
7 Greenwood Academies Trust	7	2585
Keystone Academy Trust	7	2082
Wellspring Academy Trust	7	1178
10 Anthem Schools Trust	5	2677
Horncastle Education Trust	5	1689
University of Lincoln Academy Trust	5	2594

There are thirty-five active multi-academy trusts operating within Lincolnshire and a total of 152 Lincolnshire academies that are members of multi-academy trusts. This represents 80.4% of all Lincolnshire Academies. Thirty-seven (19.6%) of Lincolnshire academies are single-academy trusts and are not members of multi-academy trusts. Eight multi-academy trusts have just one Lincolnshire academy as a member; three of these are single Lincolnshire academy multi-academy trusts. The other five also have academies that are not within Lincolnshire. Six multi-academy trusts have two academies; three of these trusts are currently based entirely within Lincolnshire. There are forty-seven academy trusts in Lincolnshire that have less than four schools, including single academy trusts.

	National	Lincs
1 Academies Enterprise Trust	57	2
2 Greenwood Academies Trust	37	7
3 The David Ross Education Trust	34	8
4 Our Lady Of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust	32	4
5 The Enquire Learning Trust	30	1

The largest academy trusts nationally that operate within Lincolnshire are Academies Enterprise Trust (Fifty-seven Academies, two in Lincolnshire), Greenwood Academies Trust has thirty-five academies, seven in Lincolnshire, and The David Ross Education Trust has 34, eight within Lincolnshire. Our Lady Of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust has taken on

four Lincolnshire Schools and now has 32 academies nationally and the Enquire Learning Trust has thirty Academies, one in Lincolnshire,

Conclusion

The Schools' Forum is asked to note the contents of the report.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

The academy conversion process is fully understood and has been in place for a number of years. There are services funded by the number of maintained school pupils (e.g. de-delegation services). Future anticipated funding levels are considered through the annual detailed budget setting exercise.

The actual split between Local Authority maintained and academies has no financial risk to the Council from the Dedicated Schools Grant schools delegation budget perspective.

Background Papers

No background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

This report was written by Ady Clarke, who can be contacted on 01522 553216 or ady.clarke@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

Agenda Item 13

29 June 2023 – virtual meeting

Election of Chairman		
Election of Vice-Chairman		
Review of LSF Constitution and Membership	Mark Popplewell	For the Schools Forum to consider and update its Rules of Operation
Implementation of the direct National Funding Formula - Government consultation response	Mark Popplewell	To provide Schools' Forum an update to the Government's consultation response on the direct National Funding Formula
Section 251 Budget Statement 2023/24	Elizabeth Bowes	To provide an update to the Schools' Forum regarding the budget statement for 2023/24
Annual Report - Special Educational Needs	Sheridan Dodsworth	To receive an annual report on Special Educational Needs
Annual Report on Early Years	Geraldine O'Neill	To receive an annual report on Early Years' Service
Portage service	Sara Gregory	To share with the Schools' Forum an overview of the findings from the review of the Portage Service and the recommendations on the re-commissioning of the Portage Service
Academies and Trust Update	John O'Connor	To provide the Schools' Forum with an update on the latest position regarding the number of Maintained Schools and Academies and the pupils in them
Lincolnshire Schools' Forum – Work Programme	Emily Wilcox	To provide the Schools' Forum with an opportunity to discuss potential items for future meetings, which will be subsequently, included on the Work Programme

Future Meeting Dates	Emily Wilcox	For the Schools' Forum to agree their future meeting dates
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5 October 2023 – virtual meeting

National Funding Formula for schools - update 2024/25	Elizabeth Bowes	To provide the Schools' Forum with an update on the mainstream school funding
De-delegation of Maintained Primary Schools Budgets (2024/25)	Mark Popplewell	To seek approval from the maintained primary school representatives approval to the Local authority's proposals
Revised Schools Budgets 2023/24	Mark Popplewell	To provide information on the revised Schools Budget for 2023/24 and to seek support
Schools Broadband Services	Mark Popplewell	To provide an update to the future schools broadband arrangements available for all Lincolnshire schools
Academies and Trust Update	John O'Connor	To provide the Schools' Forum with an update on the latest position regarding the number of Maintained Schools and Academies and the pupils in them
Alternative Provision Arrangements	To be confirmed	To provide a update on how alternative provision arrangements are working
Lincolnshire Schools' Forum – Work Programme	Emily Wilcox	To provide the Schools' Forum with an opportunity to discuss potential items for future meetings, which will be subsequently, included on the Work Programme