



North Tyneside Council

Quadrant, The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park,
North Tyneside, NE27 0BY
Tel: 0345 2000 101

Item 3 Minutes

Meeting Schools Forum **Date** 15th January 2025

Location Via Microsoft Teams

Present

✓ Present
D Deputy
A Apologies
O Absent

| Name | Organisation | Representing | 15.01.2025 |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Angi Gibson | Hadrian Park Primary School | Academy | D (Tim Jones) |
| Anthony Gollings | St Thomas More | RC Diocese | ✓ |
| Claire Withers | Fordley Primary School | Primary | O |
| Colette Bland | St Mary's RC Primary School (NS) | Academy | ✓ |
| Colleen Ward | Coquet Park First School | First (*) | ✓ |
| Daniel Jamieson | Burnside Community College | Secondary | ✓ |
| David Watson | St Thomas More | Academy (*) | ✓ |
| Diane Turner | Tyne Coast | 16-19 Provider | O |
| Finn Wilcock | Southridge First School | First | ✓ |
| Gavin Storey | Cullercoats Primary School | Primary (*) | ✓ |
| Gillian Tawes | Shiremoor Primary School | Governor - Primary | A |
| Jane Lowe | Monkseaton Middle School | Governor - Secondary | ✓ |
| Joanne Thompson | Holystone Out of School | Early Years PVI | ✓ |
| Jonathan Heath | John Spence High School | Academy | ✓ |
| John Croft | Sir James Knott | Nursery | ✓ |
| John Newport | Marden Bridge Middle School | Middle (*) | ✓ |
| John Ord | Greenfields Primary School | Governor - Primary (*) | O |
| Justina Terretta | Beaconhill Special School | Special | ✓ |
| Karen Croskery | North Tyneside Student Support Service | Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) | D (Allison Maughan) |
| Kelly Holbrook | Longbenton High School | Secondary (*) | ✓ |
| Kerry Lillico | Grasmere Academy | Academy | O |
| Laura Baggett | Monkhouse Primary School | Primary (*) | ✓ |
| Lesley Griffin | Wellfield Middle School | Governor - Secondary | ✓ |
| Louise Bradford | C of E Diocese | C of E Diocese | ✓ |
| Matt Snape | Marden High School | Secondary (*) | A |
| Phil Kemp | Trade Unions | Trade Unions | D (Claire MacLeod) |
| Philip Sanderson | Kings Priory | Academy (*) | ✓ |
| Stephen Baines | Holystone Primary | Primary (*) | ✓ |
| Steve Wilson | Whitley Bay High School | High (*) | ✓ |
| Wayne Myers | Richardson Dees Primary | Primary | ✓ |
| | | | |
| In Attendance: | | | |
| Julie Firth | Director of Children's Services | NTC | ✓ |

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| Jon Ritchie | Director of Resources | NTC | ✓ |
| Andrew Brown | Principle Accountant, Finance | NTC | ✓ |
| Christina Ponting | Senior Manager – Schools HR | NTC | ✓ |
| David Mason | Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer | NTC | ✓ |
| Diane Thompson | Senior Accountant – Schools Finance | NTC | ✓ |
| Jane Cross | Senior Business Partner, Finance | NTC | ✓ |
| Ian Wilkinson | Strategic Lead, Education and Inclusion Review | NTC | ○ |
| Lisa Ramshaw | Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion | NTC | ✓ |
| Mark Mirfin | Assistant Director, Commissioning, Partnerships and Transformation | NTC | ✓ |
| Amanda Frankish (Guest) | Senior School Improvement Officer: Inclusion | NTC | ✓ |
| Kirsty Williams | Commissioning Manager | NTC | ✓ |
| April Gibbs-Thorn | Statutory Services Officer – Schools Forum | NTC | ✓ |

(* indicates current member of Finance Sub Group)

Minutes of Meeting

| Ref | Item | |
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| 1. | Welcome and Apologies | |
| | <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and issued a reminder that the meeting is live streamed to the public on the Authority's YouTube Channel.</p> <p>A reminder of roles and responsibilities for Forum Members was provided.</p> <p>See table above for apologies.</p> | |
| 2. | Attendance Register / Membership | Christina Ponting |
| | <p>Attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See table above. <p>Membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP confirmed that a number of terms of office have been reviewed since the last Forum meeting. • Membership of Schools Forum was reviewed in Summer 2024 in light of Academy conversations and the number of Academy seats were increased at that time. • The percentage of those pupils in conversion since the last review is not considered large enough to amend membership numbers. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was recommended that Membership is reviewed at such time as schools convert moving forward any changes needed will be brought back to Forum. The Chair noted his agreement, Forum did not raise any disagreement. | |
| 3. | Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising | |
| | Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting with no matters arising. | |
| 4. | Declarations of Interest | |
| | None | |
| 5a | Local Authority Finance Update David Mason | |
| | <p>DM talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p>Budget Context in the Final Year of Our North Tyneside Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DM outlined to Forum what has been delivered so far including investment in parks, leisure centres and libraries, regeneration of North Shields, Wallsend and the Northwest, building 2350 affordable homes, commitment and extra £2m per year for improvements to roads and pavements, commitment to the Neat Streets initiative, secured external funding and a reduced carbon footprint by 59%. <p>In Year position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved Budget of £195m, representing an increase of £13m from 2023/24. Projected net expenditure equals £204.5m, totalling an overspend of £9.5m. DM noted challenges faced by the main pressures in Social Care. Despite pressures face there has been over £10m savings delivered. <p>Reserves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DM highlighted £44m in General Fund reserves; £28m held as earmarked reserves for specific purpose and planned use. Strategic Reserve (£8.5m) and General Fund Balance (£7m) are utilised for one-off unforeseen circumstances. Unearmarked reserves totalling £16m are available. Significant risks against this are being currently monitored including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £7-9m 24/25 outturn and potential in-year overspend. c.£7m Monkseaton High School Deficit Balance (26/27). £10m+ School construction remediation. Completed Projects include School Catering, Garden Waste, Capital Financing, Adult Social Care, Buildings & Assets. | |

MFTP Approach

- MFTP approach is driven by the key priorities in the Our North Tyne side plan and underpinned by a clear Financial Strategy
 - Strategic Alignment
 - Governance
 - Sustainability
 - Resilience
- The position is improving with the existing approach, for example the cumulative funding gap for 27/28 has reduced from £33m to £13.2m.
- DM outlined areas of key savings and key pressures in 28/29. £79m pressures are offset by savings of £28m, funding review of £10m less Council Tax £20m resulting in a Funding Gap of £21m.
- Key savings were listed as
 - Workforce review.
 - Adult Social Care; prevention and commissioning changes.
 - Children's Social Care; prevention and in-house provision.
 - Financial Management; reserves review and support (external funding).

Discussion

- Gavin Storey asked for clarification regarding the building of 2350 affordable homes coupled with the impact of falling birth rates and in relation to the closure of Monkseaton High School on School admissions and boundary/catchment areas.
- It was clarified that a new target of the totality of growth numbers in the Local Plan is expected. The 5k homes mentioned are affordable homes and this target is part of a long-term plan (2032) and the build out rate of those homes is taken into consideration.

Sufficiency within the next 5–10-year build of houses impacts not only on schools but other areas also. School planning takes into consideration a reduction in birth rate; roughly for every 100 homes is 30 pupils over school years. The house building plan, the type of homes and the rate of build out rate are critical parts of pupil planning and overall budget planning.
- In terms of catchment areas, JF answered that given the recent decision on Monkseaton High before Christmas the catchment areas are an element still being worked through.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a change to catchment areas in the medium term, but not in the short term as a wholesale change to catchment areas. • JR confirmed that information will be shared with Headteachers and colleagues and confirmed that Local Authority colleagues will visit a Headteacher Forum to discuss pupil placement and strategic planning. | |
| 5b. | Schools Finance Update Jane Cross/ Andrew Brown | |
| | <p>JC talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p>2025/26 DSG Funding Allocations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DSG 2025/26 allocation was shown on screen which also showed a comparison with prior years as outlined in table 1 of the report. • The October 2024 Census was used for the allocations for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2025/26 comprising of four blocks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools £168.102m ○ Central £1.507m ○ High Need £37.486m ○ Early Years £34.297m <p>2025/26 Schools Block Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2025/26, the Authority will continue to receive its DSG funding based on the DfE National Funding Formula (NFF). Following consultation with Schools, which took place during October 2024 and subsequent Schools Forum approval in November, the Authority is proposing to continue to align the Local Funding Formula (LFF) to the National Funding Formula factors, as in 2024/25. The proposed Schools block rates were shown in Appendix A of the report. • The Authority Proforma Tool (APT) is currently being worked through to calculate individual schools funding. The MFG is between 0% and -0.5%. To date this looks affordable with MFG at the maximum of 0%. • As approved at November Forum, Growth Funding was set at £0.200 and falling rolls at £0.100 based on historic averages. • The Authority Proforma Tool (APT) will be finalised and submitted to the DfE for the 22 January 2025 deadline. • The Authority, in line with the DSG Management plan, have since submitted a disapplication request to the DfE to request the transfer. | |

- The Authority continues to work to consider alternatives if the disapplication request is not agreed. If the disapplication request is approved, Forum agreed that the allocation should impact on all schools by adjusting the MFG and MPPF through the Authority Proforma Tool (APT), in line with statutory guidance, this request was included within the disapplication request.
- In relation to the NI changes for employees from April, the DfE have confirmed that this will be a separate grant for schools. No details are known to date.
- JC highlighted to Forum, the impact of changes to pupil numbers. Between the Oct 23 and Oct 2024 census there has been a reduction of 409 pupils and a corresponding growth of 125 pupils with EHCP's.

2025/26 High Needs Block

- The £37.486m figure for the 2025/26 High Needs block reflects the increased DSG funding announced by the DfE and includes funding previously included as separate grants for pay award and pension increases, as in 2024/25.
- The Authority submitted the 2024/25 third and final monitoring report against the DSG Management Plan on 27 November 2024 to the Department for Education (DfE) and reported an in-year projected pressure of £0.759m against the original budget
- The Authority is still confident that the High Needs block will reach a positive in year balance by the year end 2027/28.

2025/26 Early Years Block Funding

- Early years funding rates as announced by the DfE in December show an additional £10m in 2025/26.
- The additional funding links back to the expansion of free childcare for working parents with introduction of 30 hours free childcare for children 0.9m in September.
- Due to the delay in the final funding figures and confirmation of changes to the Early Years Funding Formula, the Authority previously circulated a questionnaire to funded providers asking them to identify the priorities for the local funding formula.

2025/26 Central Schools Services Block

- Funding for the Central Schools Services block has been reduced by DfE in relation to historical funding by £0.102m, which represents a 20% reduction in funding for the historic commitments.

- Ongoing functions have had a slight increase of £0.030, representing a 2.81% increase. However the funding for ongoing functions is linked to pupil numbers, so the actual increase is lower, due to a reduction in pupil numbers.
- DfE have said that the Authority can challenge the reasonableness of the reduction in funding by providing relevant evidence. The deadline for the challenge is 31 January 2025.
- The list of services provided via CSSB funding is listed in table 5 of the report. The net reduction in funding of £0.072m is identified in this table. A pressure was noted in the increases in national copyright licence charges.
- Forum was reminded that they can request additional services information and if any highlighted work can commence with Finance sub-group and reported back to March 2024 Forum.

De-delegated services

- The list of the proposed de-delegations for 2025/26 is included in table 6 in the report. The rates are at 2024/25 excluding special leave.

Discussion

- Justina Terretta queried the High Needs Block figure of £37.486m that appeared to be in the report but not on the corresponding table.
- JC confirmed the figure is reflected in Table 1 with Table 2 being a breakdown of the in-year position.
- JT asked if there is a possibility of a breakdown of budgets, as with early years and mainstream, for specialist schools. JC confirmed a table can be pulled together for special schools.
ACTION: JC to distribute an individual budget breakdown for special schools.
- The Chair requested clarification on ongoing pension costs.
- CP outlined that ongoing pension costs are historic and as a school staffing cost would technically lie with schools' budgets.
- The pot has been closed for some time; however, the pot is index linked and can only be reduced by the personal circumstances of claimants.
- JC noted that previously, where there has been a pressure in this area, this has fallen to the Authority.
- The Chair asked Forum if any further information is required on CSSB services. There were no requests for additional information.

- It was agreed that as no additional information requests were made, Forum Finance sub-group can be convened to look at areas.

Recommendations

Schools Forum was asked to:

- Note the update on the allocations for 2025/26 for each of the four funding blocks and the proposals for the distribution of funding;

NOTED

- Note the changes to the schools' block funding;

NOTED

- Note the potential impact on the schools' block if the 0.5% transfer is required following the outcome of the disapplication request;

NOTED

- Note the pressure on the High Needs block, including the potential impact if the disapplication request to DfE is not approved;

NOTED

- Note the changes to Early Years funding allocations proposed for 2025/26, the proposed rates as outlined in table 3 of the report and that the funding formula will be shared with the sector prior to implementation;

NOTED

- Approve the services funded under CSSB and note any services where Forum requires additional information;

APPROVED

- Approve the de-delegated items rate per pupil (excluding special leave);

APPROVED

2024/25 Schools Budget Monitoring

- AB wished to note thanks to all schools for their engagement with Schools Finance team and acknowledge the work involved.
- Forum was reminded that the overall level of school balances at the end of March 2024 was a deficit of £2.930m. This was with the inclusion of £1.868m SIFD funding.
- The 2024/25 budget plan indicated a £9.707m deficit.
- Schools have now completed the first set of monitoring for 2024/25 and indicate a projected year-end balance of £9.993m deficit; a variance of £0.286m against the 2024/25 budgeted deficit.

2024/25 Deficit Schools

- In 2023/24 there were 21 schools identified with projected deficits, with a total value of £15.572m.
- There are now 25 schools identified with expected deficits in 2024/25 following budget monitoring submissions, with a total deficit value of £15.650m.
- The position of 25 individual schools is outlined in Table 8 in the report.
- JR stressed the need to be successful in getting additional funding from DfE. There is a serious risk in terms of increasing deficit balances but also the impact on schools as they academise. As such, the whole deficit approval process needs to be fully enforced. JR acknowledged sympathy for schools' positions and that schools are doing as much as they can.
- AB highlighted the importance of the work being carried out by schools, the finance team and SMRA's on deficit positions and highlighted that 8 of the deficit schools are anticipating a reduction in their deficit.

Next steps

- Review SRMA Reports & Recommendations
- Review Initial deficit clinics & recommendations
- Follow up Deficit Clinics
- Complete Budget Monitor 2
- Identify potential new SRMA deployments

Discussion

- The Chair observed that in terms of planning and birth rates it was hoped that the strategic review continues at pace to give certainty to schools. Pressures on schools are going to increase moving forward and it is imperative that certainty is achieved, and any decisions needed to secure viability for schools are made as soon as possible.
- Gavin Storey queried when it is likely that schools will see the accurate new schools' budgets. It was confirmed that funding allocations are anticipated by end February 2025. The allocations will then be fed into the SBS planning tool to build up budgets starting at the beginning of March 2025.
- Stephen Baines queried when the full functionality of the SBS tool may be achieved and noted the frustration of schools in not being able to access the system.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AB noted there was not a specific date for full functionality. A resolution is anticipated soon. There are a number of weekly meetings, and this issue has now been escalated as an I.T and Finance. Outstanding issues are being addressed one by one, so whilst there is no definitive answer progress is being made. It has been made very clear to SBS that full functionality is required at the beginning of March 2025. • Stephen Baines noted the frustration being caused in schools for budget monitoring. AB acknowledged the frustrations of schools and the finance team and noted the significant extra work being caused by the delay. <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the growing pressure on Schools and the increasing number of schools in deficit; <p>NOTED</p> | |
| 6. | <p>Safety Valve</p> | <p>Mark Mirfin</p> |
| | <p>MM talked through the presentation on screen.</p> <p>Executive Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a year-on-year increase in the cumulative deficit ahead of the entry into the Safety Valve Intervention Programme. • Strong progress has been made to deliver systems, change and secure a stronger financial position. It was noted that there is a challenging in-year 2024/25 position. • The DSG management plan is now being remodelled and, despite the delayed savings for 2024-25, remains on track to reach a positive in year balance on its DSG High Needs Block by the year end 2027-28. • The Safety Valve programme will no longer be further extended, however, those with a Safety Valve Agreement will continue. <p>Recap on SV Agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A table of Forecast DSG deficit and payments was shown on screen. All payments to date have been received. • There has been no confirmation yet of the third DfE return payment, and Forum will be updated accordingly when this confirmation has been received. • £4.6m capital bid to support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Refurbishment and build of ARPs | |

- Refurbishment of Riverside Centre to create a 0-5 Early Years Partnership Nursery
- Funding for Inclusion
- £9.220m pressure forecast can be attributed to a number of factors; inflationary pressures, a higher number of children with EHCPs than forecast and higher numbers of children and young people in maintained special school provision.

Overview of controls/strategic priorities

- An overview of controls and strategic and operational partnerships and governance was shown on screen. As well as mitigations including whole school audits, the new SEND Support Service operating model, ARP's and SEN Units and Capital Investment.

Risks

- Risks were discussed and shown on screen as follows:
 - 0.5% transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block
 - Mediations and Tribunals
 - Maintained Special School capacity
 - EHCP and special school projections
- MM referred to the Forum vote against 0.5% transfer from Scholls Block to High Needs block and stressed that schools' views are appreciated and accepted.

Next steps

- Roll out of current initiatives
- Remodelling of DSG Management Plan
- Review of bandings and tariffs
- SEND post 16 progression pathways
- Alternative Provision and Section 19 duty
- Co-production of SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy

Discussion

- The Chair asked for clarification on why the remodelling of the DSG plan was necessary.
- MM noted in light of increased numbers of children/young people it is right and proper to remodel. JR suggested that a review and remodel at this time is good financial management.
- MM gave assurance that all work is continuing at pace.
- Anthony Gollings asked for clarification on the £4.6m capital funds, where those funds are being spent and how areas of investment are identified.
- MM confirmed £1m funding for inclusion investment in schools, supporting 45 schools. £3.2m funding for the ARPS where a

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| | <p>proportion has been spent with a plan to expand. The residual amount was used for the creation of the Early Years partnership. It was noted the High Needs Capital Investment group have oversight of the spend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthony Gollings noted that Newcastle is looking to invest in improvements in provision in mainstream schools with children with EHCPS or a form of SEND need and asked if there had been investigation into this approach. • MM confirmed that the 45 schools that benefited from funding for inclusion are on the whole mainstream schools and ARPs are in mainstream schools. • The Chair suggested to Forum that in terms of future Safety Valve updates if there are any areas requiring more detail, please let us know. | |
| 7. | <p>ARPs/SEN Units Update Amanda Frankish/Kirsty Williams</p> | |
| | <p>KW talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) is the places that are reserved at a mainstream school for pupils with a specific type of SEN, taught for at least half of their time within mainstream classes, but requiring a base and some specialist facilities around the school and caters for a specific area or areas of SEN, usually for pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan, but could include pupils on SEN support • SEN units are special provisions within a mainstream school where pupils with SEN are taught within separate classes for at least half of their time and caters for a specific area or areas of SEN. They are usually for pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan but may also provide support for pupils with SEN support. <p>Commitments in the Safety Valve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The commitment of the Safety Valve includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to develop the range of ARP provision in North Tyneside, as part of the wider system of SEND placements, to better reflect the changing needs of the cohort of children with SEND. • increasing capacity for social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) and speech, language, and communication (SLCN) and autism (ASC). | |

- To maximise inclusion by increasing capacity and expertise within mainstream schools and to avoid unnecessarily placing children in more specialist provision.
- Anticipated numbers are:
 - 138 (2024)
 - 167 (2025)
 - 199 (2026)
 - 230 (2027)
 - 253 (2028)
- As a 'road map' of development, Primary ARP, and secondary ARP in each area to ensure children and young people can stay in their local community and ensure SEN unit provision is meeting need but also taking the pressure of special schools.
- It was noted that as special schools are taking more complex needs, there is a need to ensure mainstream schools can meet a higher level of need than previously, through ARPs and or SEN units.

The ARP Steering Group

- Meeting since Summer Term 2023 and the whole group meet half termly.
- Both Schools and Local Authority representation. 22 Schools across North Tyneside involved.
- Members from the Language and Communication Team, Education Psychology Service, HIVE, NHS Northeast, and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

Consultation

- Significant consultation takes place via Schools in the steering group, Parents and Carers; both in-person sessions and one online session supported by North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum.
- The Participation Team supported Children and Young People to contribute with their 'voice.'
- In consultation, all were positive about ARPs and believe them to be a significant part of North Tyneside's SEND Offer.

ARP/SEN Service Level Agreement

- Sets out the expectations of the School and Local Authority
- Outlines Referrals, Entry and Exit points and the end of placements.
- Highlights additional resources available to the ARP/Sen unit. This includes dedicated educational psychology time.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out a Quality Assurance Framework and Funding Model. <p>Phase 1 Completion</p> <p>Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grasmere ARP has been converted to a Language and Communication SEN unit, with the possibility of a new Language and Communication SEN unit at Waterville Primary school. • The Eden Centre established in September 2024 for children and young people with SEMH needs. • Increased capacity in the ARPs at two schools from September 2024. • Unfilled places in the ARPs now filled. • Continue to explore expansions of current ARPs and development of new ARPs. • Financial commitment and additional £0.320 in ARPs. <p>Phase 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring with a feeder primary school ARP for Burnside ARP. • Seek an alternative first school in the north-east planning area. (NEPA). • Increase of up to 6 additional places at EDEN centre from September 2025. • Possible new Language and Communication SEN unit at Waterville Primary school. • Continue to explore expansions of current ARPs and development of new ARPs. <p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To fully implement phase 2. • To work on communications, this will include producing a short animation which will be shared widely. • To start the quality monitoring process within the ARP/SEN unit agreements in the spring term. | |
| 8. | <p>Consideration for Special Leave for 25/26 Financial Year</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Christina Ponting</p> | |
| | <p>CP talked through a presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Forum were reminded that consultation / consideration was taken at different stages, resulting in a final decision May 2024. • Following consultation, it was agreed to retain both parts of the SLA. | |

Feedback

- Following further consultation, mixed feedback has been received. Schools who are financially maintained continue to note that:
 - if they had a choice, they would not buy into Part 1 as it is no longer financially viable for them, or they already buy cover insurance.
 - if they were not part of the Part 1 SLA/ it did not exist they could not get cover as they cannot afford the premiums the market charge, or the % refund outweighs the money paid in.
- Opinions therefore vary dependent on individual school experience/ timing/ circumstances.
- Forum was reminded that Part 1 is discretionary/ not all schools buy in and is experiencing reducing buy in levels as schools that have the choice choose not to buy in. All schools (irrespective of their employer status) are required to buy into Part 2 to fulfil their previously agreed employer obligations.

Considerations: Part 1

- In respect of Part 1 only, CP noted the following:
 - Diminishing Buy in Levels and Claims patterns remain difficult to predict.
 - Should De-delegation arrangements change, there will need to be a lead in time/ notice provided to current schools who are part of the SLA so that they can look at/ make alternative arrangements.
 - The Pay Award for September 2025 is to date unknown as are future employer costs, as whilst it has been noted that school employers will receive some Grant funding in respect of employer national insurance contributions, the detail behind the Grant amount at an individual school level is yet to be confirmed.
 - Several schools already have insurance in place, but not all schools have this as they either did not want to or could not afford premiums.

Points to Note: Part 2

- In respect of Part 2 only, CP noted the following:
 - There are formal recognition arrangements in place which have been previously agreed/ confirmed with school employers.

- The SLA applies to all TU/PA's: ASCL, NAHT, NASUWT, NEU, GMB, Unison, Unite. (Central recharge remains in place for support staff TU {also CET from May 24}). Therefore, staff at all levels in schools including leadership and support can access trade union support/ be represented.
- Existing arrangements for the release of staff from their own employer/ home school remain in place until 31st August 2025 and as agreed within school's forum these would be honoured/ remain in place to 31st August in support of the home/ to not destabilise curriculum delivery/ costing models in the home school.
- Trade union colleagues have requested that consideration is given to providing/ adding back the time lost in 2024 from April 2025.
- Pay Award for Sep 25 to date unconfirmed and additional Grant funding linked to increases in employer costs yet to be finalised/ confirmed.
- Claims patterns remain in line with plans/ expectations as agreements are put in place in support of funding model/ working alongside trade union colleagues in advance of the academic year commencing.

Current Claims: Part 1

- December 2024/YTD as follows:
 - £360k (v £452k).
 - 309 monthly claims/ 87 claimants.
 - Average claim: £4.3k.
 - Range: £116 – £13.7K.
 - Includes pay award (average 5.5%) and pay progression (both effective September 2024).
- Average YTD does include pay award and progression. CP stressed that Part 1, particularly the maternity claims that make up most of the claims are exceedingly difficult to predict.

Potential Costs

- Part 1 – £24.68 currently.
 - 6% minimum increase to £26.16 from April 2025, but this does not take into consideration pay drift or average claim value.
- Part 2 – £6.52 currently.

6% minimum increase £6.91 from April 2025. Other options for consideration, including 6% minimum were noted:

- 6% 39p per pupil £6.91 stand still/ reduced.
- 7% 46p per pupil £6.97 allows for catch up pay base.
- 8% 52p per pupil £7.04 allows for lost time recovery.
- 10% 65p per pupil £7.17 on-par with % increase previously.

- Individual schools' data for Part 1 costs was shown on screen.

Schools Forum asked to consider: Part 1

- If SLA de-delegation arrangements are to remain in place for Part 1 this would need to remain as a de-delegation/ collective decision as it could not be operated effectively otherwise as buy in levels could fluctuate and that could result in the arrangements not being viable/ would affect a school's ability to place. However, it was also noted that a de-delegation decision does not account for opt out at point of a school converting to be an academy, therefore funding at the beginning of the budget year and throughout the year are subject to change.
- If De-delegation arrangements were to end a lead in time would be needed until end of August 2025 for the reasons already noted and to give schools time to plan, look at the market, etc.
- If the SLA were to change to allow different school sectors to vote; e.g. Primary & Secondary (as linked to Schools Forum de-delegation arrangements on voting) this would result in both sectors having the ability to choose to retain or remove the SLA.
- If the decision were to convert the arrangements to a full SLA only route thus letting schools decide, this would impact on refund values as there would need to be a minimum buy in level. This would be exceedingly difficult to predict/ operate/ manage as monies would fluctuate and the ability to refund a reasonable payment would be left to quite a lot of parameters that would be difficult to operate. It was therefore not recommended that this was an option for consideration.

Schools Forum asked to consider: Part 2

- 6% minimum increase £6.91 from April 2025, but this does not take into consideration pay drift or average claim value and lost time in previous years. A number of options were noted for consideration:

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 6% 39p per pupil £6.91 stand still/ reduced. ○ 7% 46p per pupil £6.97 allows for catch up pay base. ○ 8% 52p per pupil £7.04 allows for lost time recovery. ○ 10% 65p per pupil £7.17 on-par with % increase previously. <p>Due to the time in the meeting to discuss the above and give the matter consideration, including school members being able to fully reflect the views of the schools they represent it was recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. An assumption made that both SLAs would operate in the 2026/26 budget year and that a 6% increase be applied to both SLA values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Part 1 to be increased from £24.68 to £26.16 per pupil. b. Part 2 to be increased from £6.52 to £6.91 per pupil. <p>AGREED</p> b. CP offered to undertake some Headteacher updates and briefings and to come back to Forum with an update in March 2025. <p>AGREED</p> c. Chair noted that Forum would then be required to make a decision on the future of Part 1 (including a confirmed per pupil value) and the value of Part 2 (as this was required to remain in place) in the March forum. <p>AGREED to be added to the March agenda.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gavin Storey requested a simplistic guide to inform collaborative groups prior to decision. • ACTION: Special Leave presentation to be shared to Forum. • The Chair asked for clarity against indicative figures listed in the presentation under Current Claims. • CP noted confirmed £0.373m claim value for primary only in YTD date claims. • The Chair confirmed the actions noted above to take place and for Forum to come back to March Forum with considered opinions on the TU increase. | |
| <p>9.</p> | <p>Any Other Business</p> | |
| | <p>JC talked through a presentation on screen for two items of Any Other Business. Main points to note as follows:</p> | |

Exceptional Premises Costs

- Forum was advised that the Authority have submitted a disapplication request to the DfE to fund the exceptional premises costs at the 3 schools with concrete issues.
- This is estimated as £0.825m and covers revenue costs (rent, toilet hire, removals, school-based costs).
- Anything incurred for capital is excluded and being discussed with DfE separately.
- The disapplication is for 24/25 but as there will be a delay in receiving the funding from DfE, it will need to be funded from the DSG initially and received back as part of the settlement the following year.
- This would not impact on Schools funding, just the overall DSG balances temporarily until the funding is received the following year.
- As this is a disapplication submission, the DfE have requested Schools Forum approval.
- If unsuccessful or full amount not agreed, the cost would be moved back to the General Fund.

Schools Forum was asked to:

- Approve the disapplication to request DfE funding for exceptional premises costs;

APPROVED

Monkseaton High School

- The decision to close the school means there will be no year 9 in-take in September 2025.
- Due to the funding lag linked to pupil numbers they will still receive funding based on last year's intake (October 2024 census).
- Forum was advised that if the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) is to be used to adjust Monkseaton High's funding another disapplication submission is required. This would mean funding can be reduced based on September 2024's year 9 intake and it would be held in the Growth funding allocation. This could then be allocated to schools who have taken additional pupils, at no disadvantage to those schools taking in additional pupils.
- The Chair stressed that the decision is not on the funding allocation process but the disapplication request.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CP advised the Chair that despite some members already having to leave the meeting, due to the over running of items, the Forum remained quorate. <p>Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve the disapplication to use the APT to adjust MHS funding; <p>APPROVED</p> | |
| 10. | Date and Time of Next Meeting | |
| | Wednesday 19 March 2025 at 12:30pm via Microsoft Teams | |