

LETTER TO THE CHAIR OF SCHOOLS FORUM FROM THE HIGH NEEDS BLOCK COMMITTEE

Schools Forum Members

Martin Doyle: Headteacher Riverside Special School – Chair
Peter Catling: Headteacher Woodlands Park NS&CC
Melian Mansfield: Pembury House Chair of Governors
Mike McKenzie: Headteacher Alexandra Park School
Will Wawn: Primary Heads Rep
Gerry Robinson: Alternative Provision
Kurt Hintz: CoNEL

Also Invited

Nathan Jones: Head of Service: Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
Phil di Leo: Chair of Governors, The Vale
Paul Durrant: Finance
Rowan Griffin: Project Manager
Tony Hartney: Chair, Schools Forum
Kristian Bugnosen: Finance Officer
Ngozi Anuforo: Commissioning Manager
Charles Cato: Finance Officer
Sarah Hargreaves: Governance Officer

15 February, 2021

Dear Tony

Re: High Needs Block annual contribution to Early Help (£1.3 million this year)

The HNB Committee has continued to scrutinise and monitor the HNB spend, including the increasing overspend. Minutes of previous meetings demonstrate the ongoing work of the Committee to identify and address the pressures on this budget which have included:

- lower than expected budget allocations;
- changes to funding of post 19-25 yrs provision;
- increasing numbers of children and young people with EHCPs of whom some require special school places;
- increased overall special school places to meet complex needs;
- the withdrawal of the annual DSG contribution to the HNB.

At our meeting of 12 February 2021 (minutes attached) the topic of the HNB's annual transfer of funding to Early Help was discussed again.

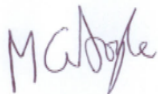
The Committee is formally requesting that the Schools Forum review this position with a view to ceasing the transfer. The Committee can find no evidence that other authorities carry out such a transaction, and there is no statutory requirement to do so.

The HNB very much hopes that this issue can be speedily addressed, (but only if Haringey is able to carry out some amelioration to ensure that no vulnerable parties face any negative impact).

I have pasted below the relevant points made at our last meeting:

- 4.2.3 The HNB £1.3m transfer to Early Help continues to make a very significant contribution to the deficit.
- 4.2.4 There is a need to understand who the client group is. For example, there is hardly any engagement between Early Help and the borough's special schools as all of their pupils go through the Social Services Disabled Children's Team. The funding is used for family support,. It is for anyone aged 0-18. Some central government funding is also available for this.
- 4.2.4.1 The committee is not aware of any other borough which transfers funding out of their High Needs Block budgets and into Early Help. There is no statutory framework to support this.
- 4.3 NJ confirmed that the focus groups will continue working after he leaves at the end of February.
- 4.4 The background in Haringey is that the funds were transferred from the HNB to Early Help in a particular period when it was felt that, due to some high-profile cases in the borough, this warranted a temporary funding boost to support families in need.
- 4.5 MD has raised this historical anomaly over the years at Schools Forum, (including at the meeting of 14th January), but there has always been a reluctance to seek a remedy to the situation because of the potential negative impact on Early Help clients. However the Committee were now in agreement that the Schools Forum needs to protect the HNB and not just shift money into Early Help when there was no requirement to do so.
- 4.6 It was **agreed** that this point should be restated at the Schools Forum, and that MD would reiterate his point that, had this sum of money not been taken annually from the HNB for the length of time it has been, the Block would actually be in credit, (unlike most others in the country), and would properly reflect the hard work that the Committee has done in reducing expenditure whenever possible.
- 4.6.1 KB will recirculate to the Committee a paper 'HNB DSG: A guide for LA's on allowable expenditure' (which he sent to Schools Forum in October). A working group had worked on useages by HNBs with the aim of coming to a consensus of what services should or should not qualify for HNB spending. Early Help did not appear in either list.
- Action KB**
- 4.7. There is also funding going to the Alternative Provision (AP), service (previously used within the Tuition Service) which should be in the HNB.
- 4.8 It appears that some funds are remaining with schools when they transfer pupils to Alternative Provision. They are then funded again in AP, but the school funding is not reclaimed so the school does not transfer their AWPU.
- 4.9 It was **agreed** that MD and PdL would write a letter to Schools Forum setting out the above points. It would request that the funds were re-allocated to the HNB, preferably in a single hit, or if not in a phased fashion overtime. If the latter, the very least information required would be that there were clear prescriptive criteria set out justifying how the money is spent in relation to the guiding imperative of High Needs funding; how it is used for SEND and disabled pupils specifically. This will be shared with Ann Graham and Tony Hartney.
- Action MD, PdL**
- 4.9.1 It was **agreed** that it should be possible to remove funding from unnecessary activities unless removing it would cause harm. This is currently difficult to quantify as it is unknown what some of the funding is being spent on.

Thank you for yours and the Forum's attention to this matter.



Martin Doyle
Chair / High Needs Block Committee

cc:

Phil di Leo, co-author of this letter
Ann Graham, Director of Children's Services