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High Needs Review (Schools) Consultancy Proposal

TO: Nottinghamshire County Council

FROM: Peter Gray (Strategic Services for Children & Young People)

RE: Review of spend on High Needs (HN)

DATE: 28th November 2017

LA CONTACTS:

Karen Hughman (Jnt Lead LA Officer)
Charles Savage (Jnt Lead LA Officer)
Ruth Marriott
Chris Jones (HLN Review Project Manager)

BACKGROUND:

Nottinghamshire has a strong reputation nationally for its approach to the education and support of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Key features include:

- (i) A relatively high level of delegation/devolution of funding to mainstream schools/ groups of schools to support the development of capacity to meet needs locally and in inclusive settings, with many examples of innovative and good quality practice
- (ii) A mainstream resourcing approach that does not rely on statutory procedures to identify pupils with particular need for additional support, and which supports local collective working (families of schools)
- (iii) A system of specialist provision that enables most pupils with significant needs to be educated locally, without needing to be placed at a distance from home
- (iv) High quality support services that target their work on children and young people that present the biggest educational challenges, while also helping schools and settings develop the capacity to meet a broad range of needs themselves

Nottinghamshire has maintained an ongoing capacity for strategic planning and review, and has been able over time to anticipate and respond to changing needs and demands. Budgets have been well managed with only marginal overspends. However, a number of factors are currently contributing to increased financial pressures. A significant overspend is predicted this year which exceeds the additional funding that the DFE is proposing to allocate to the Authority for HN in

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2018/19 (£2.7m¹). Initial analysis by officers suggests the following as being particularly relevant:

- (i) Some increase in the numbers of children and young people with complex and significant needs
- (ii) Increased demands on levels of attainment in mainstream schools which are affecting their capacity to be inclusive
- (iii) Increased pressure for statutory assessment following the introduction of the national SEND reforms
- (iv) Increased parental expectations that pupils will stay on in specialist educational provision post 16 and beyond
- (v) A “modernisation” of the work-force in the Authority’s SEN casework team has led to a less experienced and professionally trained workforce overall and has made challenging schools on inclusion practice more difficult

The biggest increase in spend is on placements in independent/non-maintained special schools. However, this is linked to a broader increase in provision demands, with some pupils being placed in this kind of provision because local special schools are full.

The Authority has decided to commission an external review of its HN spend which will look at some of these factors in more detail. It is also expected to provide some comparisons of spend/pressures against other similar Authorities (Derbyshire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire etc) and across different areas of the county. Officers are keen to engage with schools and other stakeholders to help clarify the issues and identify a viable way forward. A series of meetings are planned for Spring Term 2018 and the review will inform and be informed by these. The review will culminate in a report to Schools Forum in April 2018, with an Executive Summary to be distributed more broadly.

CONSULTANT CONTRIBUTION

The Authority is keen to engage a consultant to carry out this review, who has national experience of HN expenditure issues, as well as a good knowledge of the local context. Peter Gray (Senior Consultant: SSCYP) has been approached with this in mind. The following is based on initial discussions with key LA contacts (Karen Hughman (StSS), Ruth Marriott (ICDS / Commissioning) and Charles Savage (EPS)).

Suggested methodology:

¹ This reflects a growth in overall population (2-18) and some adjustment for Authorities that have been funded below the levels indicated by the new national HN funding formula.

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The review would be carried out in 3 phases:

Phase 1: Interviews with managers/senior officers and benchmarking:

These would include the following (as well as those already interviewed):

Service Director (Education) and Team Manager of Education Improvement Service
Group Manager (ICDS) and Team Managers (ICDS)
Service Director (Commissioning and Resources) and Group Manager
(Commissioning)
Head of Schools and Families Specialist Service
Early Years officer
Post 16 officer
Schools Finance Officer and relevant colleague(s)

Benchmarking would be in liaison with Finance Officers and include:

Reference to latest DFE HN Benchmarking tool for named group of Authorities
Clarification of HN 'spend' for each Area of the county
Comparison to expected Area share of overall spend, using national HN funding indicators

Phase 2: Meetings with groups of stakeholders:

This would include:

Involvement in cross-phase Area meetings with Heads, SBAP Partnership Leads, SENCOs
Meeting with special school Heads
Meeting with CEOs of MATs, with Service Director (Education) and Diocese reps
Meeting with Family SENCOs (area nominees/volunteers)
Meeting with SBAP leads (volunteers)
Meeting with FE college managers
Meeting with group of EYs providers
Meeting with group of parents (organised by Parent Carer Forum)
Attendance at EPS management meeting
Meeting with group of SEN caseworkers
Meeting with group of SFSS practitioners

Phase 3: Review report and feedback:

A draft report would be produced for senior officer consideration before presentation to Schools Forum. This would provide an overview of key issues and recommendations for action. A shorter version would be drafted for broader

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circulation. Attendance at Schools Forum to present/discuss the report/findings would be considered as appropriate.

Management of the review:

It is suggested that progress meetings are organised to coincide with the end of each phase of the review, so that emerging issues could be identified/discussed and any organisational barriers resolved. Meetings should involve the consultant and a core of key officers (LA contacts + Team Manager of ICDS).

CONSULTANT DETAILS:

(see CV attached)