High Needs Working Group – 27/02/2025

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

1p.m. to 2:30p.m.

Attendees:			
Fiona Robinson (FR) **Chair**	Headteacher – Bensham Manor	✓	
Shelley Davies (SD)	Director of Education	✓	
Priya Perera (PP)	Head of Service, SEND Transformation & Delivery	✓	
Mark Southworth (MS)	Consultant Lead, Locality Inclusion Project	✓	
Keran Currie (KC)	School Governor – Norbury Manor Primary School	✓	
Katie Goodwin (KG)	Headteacher – St Nicolas'	X	
Clare Cranham (CC)	Headteacher – Kensington Avenue	✓	
Julie Evans (JE)	Headteacher – Priory	✓	
Stephen Hehir (SH)	Headteacher – St Giles	✓	
Alfred Donkor (AD)	Commissioning & Contracts Manager	✓	
Diana Mitrea (DMi)	SEND Finance & Quality Assurance Manager	✓	
Abioye Aimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager	✓	
Brian Smith (BS)	Finance Manager	✓	
Darran Money (DM)	Education Business Support Lead	✓	
Mori Bates (MB)	Clerk	✓	

Agenda Items

1	**Apologies and welcome**	FR
	No apologies received by MB	
2	**Previous Minutes and Actions**	FR
	2.1 Previous minutes read and reviewed – agreed to be a true record.	
3	**Therapies Update**	AD
	3.1 AD confirmed conversations have been ongoing on how best to retender the Therapies contract in order to get the best outcomes and value for money for this service. It was agreed that the £1million Schools' Forum agreed to go into the therapies contract will be used to fund the Schools' focused SLT service. 3.2 The DSG will no longer fund OTs, so as part of the remodel, the £1.7million that is coming from the ICB will fund the rest of the provision. 3.3 The contract will use a re-adjusted cluster model, now set into three areas being North, Central and South which are designed to balance it out into reasonable, manageable chunks. 3.4 In order to encourage private sector providers to participate in this tender, a market engagement event was held on the 23rd January and 29 participants attended. This week, the Procurement Act 2023 came into effect. A requirement of the act is that all public sector tenders are published on a central digital	

	platform As of last week, the platform is being finalized. Documentations and packs are being amended to reflect the new act, meaning the earliest we could go out to tender would be the 7th March, but there are regulations we need to follow. 3.5 In line with the council's tendering regulations, ever tender over the amount of £500,000 needs to be approved by the commissioning board. Therefore, along with some budgets from finance that need finalising, the earliest this will get out is the week commencing the 14th March and then the tender would in theory be live in mid-March. 3.6 All the OT input has been carried out on a gesture of goodwill. The notice has been served to no longer offer or provide the OT service. We are now currently awaiting dataset from the CHS regarding an increased demand of OTs. **Q1:** FR: If the paper ends up being stalled with the finance after four weeks pass, is there a contingency plan? **A1:** AD: There is hope that it would not take that long and that we will have a response shortly. The CHS has been notified and will continue to provide support in the interim. **Q2:** MS: Will you give the contract to separate providers rather than just the one? **A2:** AD: We are looking for up to three providers for the entire borough delivering the service. There will not be more than two bids accepted per provider. So there will be at least two different providers across Croydon. **Q3:** JE: Will the OT provision be commissioned separately? **A3:** AD: The entire envelope was the ICB is coming in, of which the OT element in the ICB funding was around £600K – it would depend how Croydon plan to proceed. The demand outweighs the provision whilst the budget remains the same meaning that it is not possible to meet the demand.	
4	**SENIF & Early Years Discussion**	TS
	4.1 Discussions took place surrounding the payments for Early Years as part of the CLSS. BS said that the budget has not been agreed for next year, though there have been recent discussions that are leading to a conclusions whereby there will be a separate pot of funding for the CLSS and a separate one for SENIF. 4.2 SD added that discussions are ongoing and an EY/HN paper will come to the working groups outlining the processes for SENIF to ensure that everyone is following the same steps. 4.3 In relation to the Early Years, High Needs budget, there is some confusion about the breakdown which has made setting a budget difficult. There needs to be a better understanding of who is being supported by CLSS and who is being supported by SENIF. Inadvertently, the system has been overcomplicated meaning that we are now readjusting the processes. 4.4 It would appear that there needs to be more transparency around the figures as there is an Early Years High Need line in the budget – although this would be good to see where the many is going 4.5 SD noted that Pam Sokhi and Mel Farris are putting something together that could perhaps go to the Early Years working group and also the High Needs working group. From then, it would be possible to have an update in six months.	
5	**CLSS Update**	MS
	5.1 MS provided the working group with an update on the CLSS. The confirmation of the two budgets has slowed down the work of the CLSS as there is little clarity on the division of the budgets. In the new financial year, it will be more stable with two distinct budgets. 5.2 The CLSS is undergoing a review, with two graduates from SD's team carrying out the review as the CLSS has been operating for five years. 5.3 SD noted that the CLSS team has not stopped working and has continued to visit schools and provide direct support in those schools. KC added that there has been a massive increase in the needs for SEND support, especially when the needs are becoming increasingly complex, which they are continuing to signpost and offer support to schools.	

	5.4 The working group voiced thanks to the CLSS team as they work behind the scenes, along with the rest of the SEND service who are supporting children from the ages of 0 up to 25. The team carry out work directly on the assessments and work to support families with the processes.	
6	**High Needs Budget**	BS
	6.1 BS stated that the quarter three update is not dissimilar to the paper Charles presented to the High Needs working group in November and that there is about a £30K difference. 6.2 They are still going through the allocations to see what is available, but there is also a need for what is statutory etc. If they send out commissioning letters with an indicative amount of which can be amended afterwards where possible. It was agreed that this would help with planning budgets.	
7	**AOB**	ALL
	PP provided the working group with a SEND update – the team are working on primary, secondary and post 16 transfers due to the high numbers of unplaced children. SD added that place planning discussions with individual schools may be helpful and thoughts can be shared surrounding provisions for children.	

AGREED ACTIONS		
Actions from previous minutes		

Next Meeting Date – 22nd May 2025 @ 1pm