

High Needs Working Group – 16/09/2025

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		X
Mark Southworth (MS)	Consultant Lead, Locality Inclusion Project		X
Keran Currie (KC)	School Governor – Norbury Manor Primary School		X
Katie Goodwin (KG)	Headteacher – St Nicolas'		X
Clare Cranham (CC)	Headteacher – Kensington Avenue		X
Julie Evans (JE)	Headteacher – Priory		✓
Stephen Hehir (SH)	Headteacher – St Giles		X
Theresa Staunton (TS)	PVI representative on Schools Forum		X
Alfred Donkor (AD)	Commissioning & Contracts Manager		✓
Jenny Bartlett (JB)	Head of Strategic Finance		X
Abioye Aimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager		✓
Brian Smith (BS)	Finance Manager		✓
Darran Money (DM)	Education Business Support Lead		X
Mori Bates (MB)	Clerk		✓

Agenda Items

- 1 **Apologies and welcome** **FR**
 - 1.1 Apologies received prior to the meeting by PP, CC and JB
- 2 **Previous Minutes and Actions** **FR**
 - 2.1 Previous minutes read and reviewed, agreed to be a true record
 - 2.2 In connection to the MSAG funding, BS stated that if there are any outstanding MSAG payments for 23/24 to get in touch as payments are up to date and paid for.
- 3 **Therapies Update** **AD**
 - 3.1 AD provided the working group with an update on the therapies contract. Following the tender that went out in May and closed in June, 7 bids were received. Each bid has undergone an evaluation process with various sectors and key players being involved throughout.

3.2 Croydon will take two bids forwards, with the highest scoring bid of the evaluation stage managing the North and South of the borough and the second highest covering Central in the hope that this will help to manage the demand in the three zones. The aim is to get this signed off by Friday.

3.3 The CHS will continue to provide a service in the interim, but we are not yet able to deal with the new providers until it has been officially signed off.

3.4 Discussions are ongoing with the CHS via the ICB on what is being offered as there are certain areas of the services will be affected and no longer provided. Given that there will be two providers working on the therapies in Croydon, it is expected there to be an improvement on the service provided.

Q1:

JE: How will it work for the special schools – are their needs and provision within the scope of the provider?

A1:

AD: They are included within the ICB funded service, but they are only able to support those already being funded. If you currently receive service from CHS, you will continue to receive it in the meantime.

4 Finance Update

MS

5.1 BS provided the working group with an update on the current financial standing of the High Needs block, confirming that a draft statement has been submitted to the DfE and this is being audited with preliminary queries coming in. The Section 251 was recently submitted and responses have been received as well.

5.2 Overall, there is more expenditure at the moment, with a £3.5 overspend on the DSG as a whole, with a view to carrying out another Disapplication request to transfer £1.2million from the Schools' Block to the High Needs Block.

5.3 An overspend will be due to the increasing numbers and there are various situations occurring where the borough has been able to meet the demand of places for children with additional needs.

5.4 Croydon has also kept within the Safety Valve bands, where the current overspend can potentially be offset against the underspend of previous years.

5.5 In regard to ELPS payments, BS added that of the 20 schools included in the ELPS, 16 have already responded, with the last few due to come in shortly.

Q2:

FR: How will this affect us with the Safety Valve agreement?

A2:

BS: If we do not meet the targets then the funding offered through the agreement will be withdrawn. They will continue to meet existing obligations, but only under the agreement. A spending review is coming through, along with open and honest discussions with the DfE.

5 **AOB**

ALL

SD added that there is ongoing discussion taking place around the SENIF policy and is waiting on a proposal to be sent over for review.

AGREED ACTIONS		
Actions from previous minutes		

Next Meeting Date – **Tuesday 4th November @ 2pm**