

Notes

AD EDUCATION NETWORK MEETING 12th November 2021, 10.00am – midday



Present: Carol Cammiss (Wokingham), Lucy Butler (W Sussex), Deb Austin (B&H), Jo Lyons (B&H), Michelle Stanley (Kent), Hayley Good (Oxfordshire), Marie Denny (Milton Keynes), Mike Stoneman (Portsmouth), Kim James (Oxfordshire), Ian Pearson (W Berkshire), Jane Winterbone (Surrey), Danielle Cassell (E Sussex), Rebecca Smith and Celia Buxton (Medway), Brian Pope (Hants), Yvette Thomas (Bucks), Paul Wagstaff (W Sussex), Johnny Kyriacou (Slough), Clodagh Freeston and Derek Wiles (Southampton).
Apologies: Simon James (Bucks), Christine McInnes (Kent), Cheryl Eyre (Bracknell Forest), Elizabeth Funge (E Sussex).

In attendance: Claire Burton (SESL RSC), Sara Brannan (NWLSC Dep RSC)

ITEM	Actions
<p>1. Local Strategic Education Systems discussion</p> <p>Claire Burton presented an update of DfE policy and priorities. Time being taken up briefing the new ministerial team and another key focus for RSCs is review meetings with MATs. There was agreement that there is a positive working relationship between the RSCs and LAs in the South-east and all are keen for this to continue.</p> <p>CO presented a brief overview of the ‘SESLIP Self-review Framework: the strategic role of the LA in local education systems’ [slides attached].</p> <p>Points from the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Over capacity, particularly in the primary phase currently. RSCs are seeking greater clarity from the DfE about the role of RSCs with difficult decisions in the system, potentially involving the closure / merger of schools. ○ RSCs highlight that their formal roles are limited to reviewing and directing MATs; they do not have a role with individual academies. ○ Disappointment was expressed by LAs, about the proposal cutting of the School Improvement and Monitoring Grant and the short consultation period. ○ Strategic configuration of local education systems: if there are large MATs with only one or two schools in a local area, their disengagement presents a number of LAs with difficulties. ○ How should the middle tier of education look in two to five years? Ongoing topic for discussion. <p><u>Actions:</u> Joint agreement for the value of such discussions. Perhaps twice a year? CO to liaise with the RSC offices and set up for 2022.</p>	<p>CO</p>
<p>2. Matters arising</p> <p>The notes from the previous meeting were agreed as accurate.</p> <p>Hampshire Trans-toolkit judicial review – hearing is in December.</p> <p>Portsmouth home education JR – draft judgement has been delivered; cannot comment until it is published.</p> <p>We should return to “Pushing at an Open Door” in 2022. CO will check whether any DCSs had conversations with MAT CEOs about their perspectives.</p> <p>Joint session with SEND Network – date yet to be firmed up. Likely now to coincide with SEND Green Paper announcements. Need to avoid Triad sessions in Jan and Feb.</p>	<p>BP</p> <p>CO</p>

ITEM	Actions
<p>Afghan refugees: although not directly affecting all LAs, it has been time-consuming for several. W Berks, Oxfordshire, Milton Keynes and Kent have met to discuss issues and raise these with SE leads. There are still challenges largely involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Insufficient and short-term funding ○ Poor communication with DfE and home office ○ Lack of planning (government depts with LAs) <p>Action: to summarise points and Lucy will raise via the SESLIP DCS meeting in December. Is there a value to raise with the lead member network too, since LAs are having to subsidise the programme?</p>	CO / LB
<p>3. Small schools</p> <p>Brighton & Hove and Surrey shared work they have been undertaking to analyse the scale of financially unsustainable schools and the strategies schools are being encouraged to follow, in order to increase their resilience and sustainability. Both have identified as many as a quarter of primary places being surplus to requirement by 2025.</p> <p>The group recognises the challenges involved and wishes to revisit this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we support practice sharing between members? Via email in the first instance; how else? • Surrey has developed a resilience and sustainability survey for all schools, and this can be shared. • The Network is keen to return to the issue with the RSCs. A strong view that academisation and/or move into a large MAT, should not be an option for small schools that are not viable. • School closures are politically very sensitive. Should there also be a short paper for SESLIP lead members, so the challenges can be spelled out clearly and lead members are both persuaded and better able to navigate a route with other LA members? 	<p>JW</p> <p>CO / DA</p>
<p>4. DfE School Improvement Grant consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm agreement across the group that there is disappointment that the DfE appears to wish to remove the grant arrangement for LAs and require LAs to negotiate de-delegation arrangements via Schools Forums. With the widely recognised efforts of LAs in supporting schools during the unprecedented previous 18 months, this feels premature and disrespectful. This change could significantly destabilise local education systems, for the sake of a relatively small amount of money. • The timeframes are also frustrating, since budget reductions are being proposed from April 2022, which leaves limited time to agree contingencies and manage contracts. • All LAs at meeting agreed that, in addition to their own responses, SESLIP should submit its response to the consultation. Several members talked of papers or responses they have compiled with / for heads or members. Please can copies of LA responses and other papers be emailed to CO, to inform the response. <p>Action: CO will extract the consultation questions and circulate to the group. All members email CO their own LA responses / papers.</p>	CO & ALL

ITEM	Actions
CO to collate a response on behalf of the group and SESLIP, to be reviewed and approved by LB and DA prior to being submitted before the closing date of 26-11-21. This will be shared with SESLIP DCSs too at their next meeting on 3 rd Dec.	CO / LB / DA
<p>5. Future meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The January date clashes for DA (and two others) with their Triad peer review. Can an alternative date be offered for the first half of term? • 4th February – confirmation of the changed date • 18th March • 6th May • 1st July • 14th Oct 	CO