

AD EDUCATION NETWORK MEETING

26th April 2024

Present: Sarah Daly (Portsmouth), Mike Stoneman (Portsmouth), Marie Denny (MKC), Claire Hayes and Sarah Clarke (W Sussex), Natalie Smith (Hants / IoW), Michelle Stanley (Kent), Ming Zhang (Wokingham), Clodagh Freeston and Derek Wiles (Southampton), Gareth Drawmer (Bucks), Clive Haines (RBWM), Naomi Carter (IoW), Mark Storey (BHCC).

Apologies: Kate Reynolds (Oxfordshire), Christine McInnes (Kent), Jo Lyons (BHCC), Julia Katherine and Carrie Traill (Surrey), Rebecca Smith (Medway), Elizabeth Funge (E Sussex).

Item	Actions
Welcome and introductions / apologies	
<p>1. Notes and matters arising</p> <p>Notes from March were agreed as being accurate.</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The materials shared by Milton Keynes have been circulated as well as the spring 2024 iteration of the EHE & CME Dashboard. • Paul Schofield has confirmed he will attend the June meeting. • Still awaiting the Reading wellbeing survey from Brian. 	BG / CO
<p>2. LGO complaints linked to LA provision of education under s19</p> <p>Analysis of numbers of complaints (circulated beforehand) demonstrate that the volume of complaints has increased threefold since 2021-22, even if this particularly focused in two or three LAs. This and operational concerns had been discussed by the CME Group.</p> <p>Natalie (co-chair) summarised these main points as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The increasing number of LGO complaints around s19 and EOTAS, the nature of some parents pursuing a complaint to get to the LGO and, on occasions when there has been shared culpability with a school, the focus solely on the LA for re-dress. In particular is there interest in opening up a dialogue with the LGO about complaints and schools and the best interest of the child (rather than a binary choice between enforcement and EOTAS)? 2. Working with health: in particular the issue of 'sign-off from school' by some GPs - open-ended, sometimes not based on diagnosis and with no advice about support and readiness to return to school. Some local initiatives with primary care to brief practice managers and develop a local protocol/ wording for letters. Should this be extended to a conversation with ICBs about a joint strategic approach? Children remaining in school where possible and sign-off as part of a package of intervention? 3. Flagging that it would be timely to update local policies around section 19, recommending that local policy updates ensure their scope is wider than just education of children with medical needs. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portsmouth has been concerned about collusion with unrealistic or unethical demands from parents in a few complaints and has started to push-back to the LGO about the most recent complaint upheld against it. • Evidence that legal and corporate complaints colleagues are risk averse and tend to advise settling, partly to close the case. Concerns there are increasingly system difficulties that can result from LGO decisions, as groups of parents share information via social media which can then raise expectations. • Hants and MKC shared work developed with ICB and primary care locally with a joint letter for all GPs from ICB, LSCB, DCS and leading GPs about the health and safeguarding benefits of a child being in school. This is accompanied by letter templates and advice about what to cover in a letter if there is high level of (mental) ill-health. Natalie and Marie agreed to send materials for sharing. 	MD / NS / CO

Item	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bucks had had to challenge its SENDIAS service that had advising some parents to pursue complaints. Advice from the CME Group to update local medical needs / section 19 policies to be as clear as possible about local processes and expectations across school, parents and LA, in the light of recent DfE guidance (here: https://tinyurl.com/474rbfrn) being less than clear. <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarah to take the concerns about LGO complaints about suitable education to the DCS group and to request a dialogue between the LGO and DCSs to better understand each others' positions. Sarah to take a proposal to the DCS group to raise the issue of inconsistent practice from GPs when signing children off from school and to suggest a joint strategic position be agreed with South-east ICBs to accompany initiatives locally to detail protocols and templates for letters. The CME Group to be tasked to set up a time-and-finish group to recommend priority updates to sections in local section 19 policies that can be shared across the South-east LAs. 	<p>SD / CO</p> <p>SD / CO</p> <p>MS / NS / CO</p>
<p>3. Local systemic approaches to inclusion and reducing exclusion.</p> <p>Marie talked to Milton Keynes' joint position and processes agreed with headteachers about pupils at risk of exclusion and, wherever possible, to refer those at highest risk to dual-rolled, respite AP places. These processes are strongly established across secondary schools. They have been extended to primary schools more recently and there is still some way to go. (see circulated materials for more details)</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important to join-up local AP and managed move arrangements with EHE policy (that a child who returns to school following a period of EHE returns to the original school). In Portsmouth, there is a similar agreement with adds a standard funding cost to an excluding school, of AWPU plus (+/- £10,000 per exclusion). Increasingly one or two academies in large, national MATs are not following the local agreement which is putting this system under pressure. This non-conformity by academies in some large trusts was echoed elsewhere. A view that little action results if raised with DfE Regions Office; it would appear because DfE have weak levers to influence large trusts in particular. Discussion about using free school presumption competitions as a way to signal local values to trusts. One LA uses criteria in its weighting and assessment of trusts to reinforce the expectation of working in partnership and inclusively. <p>Agreement to explore these themes with DfE Regions Office next time.</p>	<p>CO</p>
<p>4. Responses to Ofsted's Big Listen and Themes to Discuss with DfE</p> <p>A little discussion of elements of the Big Listen. Highlighting that processes and timings can be as much a challenge to wellbeing as the conduct of inspectors.</p> <p>Themes to ask Paul Schofield to discuss with us next meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early years: many demands are being made as a result of the commitment to considerably expand childcare to all two year. Comments that there are too many, piecemeal demands from Regions Office too often with a short turnaround. Speed of decision-making by Regions Office (too slow and detrimental to the system). The examples shared were about schools where it was agreed that a directive academy order should be pulled, but taking a very long time to achieve this (requires ministerial sign-off?). SEND funding: are there proposals to increase both the per place payment amount (which has been £10,000 since 2015) and the notional SEN allocation (at £6,000 since 2015) in the NFF? Complaints: in the light of repetition of complaints notified to Ofsted and DfE, what scope is there to align at regional level and avoid duplication? 	

Item	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School term dates: what is the DfE's position when one or two academies choose different dates to those agreed with all other schools locally (provoking parental complaints to the LA)? • Place-based planning – staffing to support continuity in this. Accountability measures – what challenges does two years with no progress 8 present? <p>Sarah and Chris to raise these with Paul, so he can prepare for discussions (together with other DfE colleagues if helpful).</p>	SD / CO
<p>Next meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>21st June</u>: First half of meeting with Paul Schofield (see item 4). Update from CME Group about S19 policies. • Chris will book one of the autumn term meetings to be in London. The January 2025 meeting will be changed to a later date; revised invites to be sent out. 	CO