



THE NATIONAL SEND FORUM Minutes 17 January 2024

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: Lorraine Petersen OBE (LP) FLSE , Chair, Rona Tutt OBE (RT) NAHT, Sibel Djemal (SDJ) Batod/Natsip, Stephen Deadman (SD) NAHE, Kiran Hingorani (KH) SWALSS/NASS, Julia Brunning (JB) NNPCF, Michael Surr (MS) nasen,

Guests: Gareth Lindop Head of Policy TSHC (GL)

Minutes: Andy Petersen (AP)

1. Welcome and Introductions

For Action

LP welcomed and thanked everyone for joining the meeting.

2. Protocol for meeting

LP went through some protocols for the meeting.

3. Apologies

Jane Carter (JC) PDNET, Malcolm Reeve (MR) WSS, Rob Williams (RW) NAHT,

4. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were altered and agreed. LP informed the forum that RCSLT had declined to re-join the forum and Chris Rollings of FLSE had resigned.

5 Policy and DfE update

AI attends every alternate meeting.

SD commented that NAHE regions Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland were part of the Change Partnerships. Regular meetings were taking place and so far, 12 separate workstreams had been identified. LP queried whether schools were being involved. SD confirmed that they were. SD commented that many of the problems involved organisations working on their own and not conferring with partners. Health were a particular problem in this respect. RT queried whether the DfE had progressed with deciding about hospital education and its relationship with alternative provision.

SD responded that little progress had been made.

KH queried whether members knew anything that was happening with OfSTED and the mental health issues around their inspections. LP commented that a school she had visited recently had had an inspection which had been a bad experience. Also early years inspections had continued despite the “pause” implemented following the coroners’ report.

RT suggested that a question for AI at the next meeting might be how the DfE was working with the SEND Implementation Board. LP agreed to follow this up with AI.

MS queried whether there was any information on the new SENCO NPQ. LP commented that there was very little information on this area. SD commented that he had heard from a DfE representative that a document on this would be available before the end of January.

LP

The DfE published [additional guidance](#) on the SENCO NPQ on 2nd February including a list of the six providers that will be offering the training from September 2024.

6 Current Issues for discussion

BSL GCSE – RT reported that BSL had been given status as an official language in 2022. Since then developments had happened quickly to give better access for the deaf population. As a result pupils across the country will soon be able to take the British Sign Language (BSL) GCSE. Graham Turner who was an emeritus professor was helping with implementing the BSL GCSE on behalf of the BDA. It was hoped that the GCSE could be implemented in 2025. There had been two consultations, one that the DfE ran on what will be the composition of the GCSE and other one run by OfQual, looking at how it might be assessed.

SDJ expressed the deaf community concerns as to where the appropriate teachers would be recruited from. Also if primary BSL signers were recruited, would they have the necessary skills to teach BSL?

SDJ felt that getting this initiative into place would take about 10 years.

MS queried how many schools were likely to come forward to take up this initiative. SDJ responded that this was the big issue. Whilst specialist schools might take part, however there were many other competing provisions for the deaf who might not be in support of this initiative.

Consultation - Elective Home Education - LP requested guidance on members feelings. RT responded That she was concerned that government were too loose in their interpretation of what was required for parents undertaking home education. This was particularly true with SEND pupils. RT felt that much of the dissatisfaction with SEND provision in mainstream schools was due to lack of resources rather than a desire to undertake home schooling. This needed to be stressed in the consultation.

RT was also concerned that the examples given in the consultation illustrated positive outcomes but did not illustrate what might happen in a negative situation.

JB commented that the main drivers were the lack of information on what alternatives were available instead of home schooling in addition to mainstream schools.

JB commented that the gap in the consultation was the lack of exposure for those parents who did not elect to home educate but were instead forced into this provision due to circumstances. In addition LP felt that parents could manage at a primary level but had difficulty once their child reached secondary age.

Consultation - Gender questioning children: draft schools and colleges guidance – LP invited members to submit any thoughts they might have on this issue.

All

The SEND Tribunal Data – LP gave a presentation derived from a “Special Needs Jungle” article on this topic (see attached slides).

JB queried whether such tribunals were a good use of local authority resources. LP commented that having a national EHCP template would not address the main issues with tribunals.

MB commented that DfE had previously set up a website giving examples of good practice with EHCPs – this had now been withdrawn.

LP commented that the 2014 reforms had embedded so much of EHCP practice within the law. In addition parents were getting much more adept at communicating with each other.

MS commented that EHCPs were dealt with by SEND case workers who did not always have a clear communication from each partner.

7. Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) next steps – Feedback from RCE Working Group

LP informed the group that AI had acknowledged the information prepared by the RCE group but had not had time to get responses from interested parties. LP agreed to write to AI and ask him to be accompanied at the next meeting by a representative who could address the RCE issue.

LP

8. Update from members: successes, issues and events

Nasen – a lot more requests for SEND reviews were being received. This had resulted from a shortage of resources at Local Authority level. LP queried what the level of take-up for online training was. MS responded that take-up had been good.

[Nasen Live](#) takes place on 5th July in Birmingham.

BATOD/NATSIP – Re: BSL GCSE - BATOD is part of the stakeholder group with BDA, ABSLTA, Signature and NDCS. BATOD had posted this when the announcement. <https://www.batod.org.uk/batod-bsl-gcse/>

BATOD has had some enquiries about the BSL teacher route. It has been agreed by the stakeholders that a joint response would be shared to maintain continuity in the information shared.

The NDCS/BATOD Specialist Deaf Curriculum Framework is due to launch as an open-source resource at a webinar event on 21st February.

NAHT – a report had been issued called “[Rethinking School Inspection](#) - delivering fair proportionate and humane school accountability”. It concluded that the Ofsted 30-year-old inspection model is unsafe, unreliable, and inhumane.

NAHT’s [annual conference](#) was scheduled for 3rd-5th May in Newport Wales.

NAHE – a leadership conference was taking place on 24th January in Birmingham, with Chris Moyses, talking about professional growth and developing your staff. On the 31st, there was a webinar on the effect of social media and screen time on young children and teenagers.

A peer review programme had been commenced which gave the opportunity for 3 schools to visit each other and feedback on positives and negatives. NAHE were part of Challenge Partners who were launching their send review programme based on groups of 3 from a cohort of 33.

NNPCF – a conference was planned in February in Newcastle. NNPCF were getting multiple reports of delays in the EHC process, mainly arising as a result of a shortage of Educational Psychologists at local authority level. There was also concern about ADHD medication shortage which was causing problems

for some children and their families. JB was pleased to relate that the “PINS” project, which is the [Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools](#) was being rolled out. This was a joint funded, joint managed project from DFA, Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England.

LP commented about the poor return of annual reviews of EHCPs.

9. NSEND operations

Nothing to report.

10. AOB

None.

11. Dates for 2023-24

LP commented that the next meeting would be virtual but she had tentatively booked the Browne Jacobson meeting room for the 22nd May and 03rd July, subject to train strikes etc.

Next Meeting to be held on 28th March 2024 (Virtual).

Meeting Closed at 11.30am