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| MEETING: | SCHOOLS FORUM |
| MEETING DATE: | 13 MARCH 2015 |
| TITLE OF REPORT: | PERMANENT FUNDING FOR SAFEGUARDING EDUCATION IN THE MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB |
| REPORT BY: | ADDITIONAL NEEDS SENIOR CASEWORK MANAGER |

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To update Schools' Forum on the role of the Education Safeguarding Officer in the Multi – Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

To seek sustainable funding to make the function permanent and to increase the capacity within the MASH.

Recommendation(s)

- THAT:**
- a) **Schools Forum support the proposal to apply to the secretary of state for approval to use the dedicated schools grant (DSG) to fund the education support function in the MASH;**
 - b) **Schools forum support the development of a service level agreement as a fall back position; and**
 - c) **Schools Forum receive a report for decision in June 2015.**

Alternative Options

- 1 To cease to fund an educational presence within the MASH. This would not be desirable nor supported by the feedback from headteachers.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 The recent Local Government Association Diagnostic (November, 2014) and the OFSTED inspection of the local authority (June 2014) reported positively on the work of the MASH, noting that responses to referrals were both timely and accurate. The provision of information by agencies was a key part in this. This improvement was part of the progress of the local authority moving to Requires Improvement in the 2014 inspection.
- 3 A recent survey of schools showed the positive impact of the Education Safeguarding Officer role in improving communication between schools and social care and in improving capacity to respond to safeguarding concerns within the schools.
- 4 The funding for the current post was from a DSG underspend. The national formula is now significantly more restrictive in the way funding can be allocated for central expenditure.
- 5 The rules in relation to de-delegation do not make allowance for a MASH or equivalent services.
- 6 Centrally retained funds could be used as a contribution to combined budgets (for example using DSG to fund social care expenditure that has a direct benefit on education). However, since April 2013 no new commitments are permitted under the national formula rules.
- 7 Permission for such a new expenditure can be granted, but an application to the Secretary of State for Education is required

Key Considerations

- 8 In September 2012, the local authority was judged inadequate in its ability to safeguard children in Herefordshire from harm. A key response to this judgement was to establish the MASH, with support from key agencies.
- 9 Given that all children are expected to access education, schools were seen as one of the key agencies to be involved. Following discussion in a number of arenas, including the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB), agreement was given by Schools' Forum (25 January 2013) to fund a post at £60,000 per annum. The initial funding agreement was for a two year period which will end in July 2015.
- 10 The development was led by a group of primary, secondary and special school headteachers and a post, based in the MASH, was established. Following some line-management difficulties, professional line-management responsibility for the post was transferred to the Additional Needs Senior Casework Manager, with operational line-management resting with the MASH Service Manager.
- 11 The local authority was the subject of another inspection by Ofsted in May 2014 (report published June 2014). The outcome of this inspection was more positive and recognised the changes made in the interim period. Key amongst these was the MASH and its effectiveness in demonstrating that well-informed decisions were being

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Steve Laycock, Additional Needs Senior Casework Manager on Tel (01432) 260816

made in relation to referrals to social care. The multi-agency nature of the information gathering process central to this.

- 12 In November 2014 a survey of schools' experiences of the MASH Education Safeguarding Officer role was conducted. Responses were received from 52 schools. Only one of the respondents had not had contact with the Education Safeguarding Officer. The responses were overwhelmingly positive. All respondents reported a good or outstanding experience of the role and the ability to access support from the post holder.

What impact has this role had on Safeguarding within your school?

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| Supporting improving communication between schools and social care | 94% (47) |
| Developing further confidence in safeguarding issues within school | 96% (48) |
| Receiving up to date information from the Education Safeguarding Officer to enhance knowledge, policy and practice within school. | 94% (47) |

- 13 When asked about priorities for the role in future, respondents suggested the priorities as:

- Being a voice for education with social care.
- Supporting education with issues around policies, procedures and training.
- Referral and guidance on safeguarding concerns.
- Continuing to enhance communication.

- 14 Consultation with the headteachers involved in defining the role also noted its positive impact on relations between schools and the referral and assessment part of social care that was now the MASH. Within the discussion there was also some comment that the role, whilst proving to be effective, had not reduced attendance at the HSCB strategic meetings as expected.

- 15 Discussion with Head of Service for Fieldwork, previously the MASH Service Manager, suggested that the role was functioning well and had developed over the 18 month period since inception. A key development was the participation of the Education Safeguarding Officer in the "Outward Facing Visits" (essentially school visits) with Service and Team Managers. These were seen as an important development of the MASH function and were valued by both schools and school staff.

- 16 These visits, however, along with the support to schools in implementing their safeguarding policies, leave and sickness mean that there are periods when there is not an education representative within the MASH. This can lead to a reduction in the effectiveness of the MASH.

- 17 Other partners within the MASH, notably the police and health, have a presence in excess of one full time equivalent. This ensures their presence at all times. Consequently, it is recommended that resource be found to fund an additional 0.5 full time equivalent post. The additional cost would be £8,800.

- 18 The cost of management of the MASH has to date been covered by children's social care. However budget pressures have led to a request that partners within the MASH offer financial support to the Service Manager post at the rate of £6,620 per annum. This equates to 10% of the cost of the post. Social care will fund 60%, with the remainder being requested from partners.
- 19 As noted above interpretation of the current Schools revenue funding guidelines suggests new commitments are not possible without permission of the Secretary of State for Education. If Schools' Forum supports the continuation of funding for the role, such an application could be made.
- 20 An alternative option would be to develop, from September 2015, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and invite schools to contribute. Approximate costings, based on the number of pupils in the county and the amount being sought might be £4 per pupil. This would be complemented by an "insurance" scheme where schools not part of the SLA might be charged at £50 per hour for support provided by the MASH Education Officer.

Community Impact

- 21 MASH supports safeguarding which provides significant support for all communities in Herefordshire. Hence the options to be considered for the continuation of funding.

Equality and Human Rights

- 22 The proposal supports the continuation of a service offer that enables equality of access and provision to all children and young people in Herefordshire and their families.

Financial Implications

- 23 The post is currently funded from an underspend of the DSG at £120,000 for two years from September 2013. This was supported by Schools Forum and agreed the Cabinet Member for Education in January/February 2013. this funding will be fully spent by the end of the summer term 2015.
- 24 The proposals in the paper are that £75,420 from the DSG be made available on an annual basis to continue to support the functioning of the MASH. This is equivalent to approximately £4 per pupil.
- 25 Permission from the Secretary of State, if successful would reduce school funding by approximately £4 per pupil. Alternatively an SLA with schools would cost a similar amount per pupil.

Legal Implications

- 26 As set out in the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 and the Department for Education guidance (Schools Forums – Operational and Good Practice Guide October 2013) the Schools Forum generally has a consultative role.
- 27 This report asks that the Schools Forum supports the local authority in its endeavours to secure funding for the role of MASH Education Safeguarding Officer.

- 28 The DSG must be used to support the Schools Budget for the education and support of children and young people. The proposal set out in this report would fall within the definition of contribution to a combined service as set out in The School Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013. Such a contribution must be approved by the Schools Forum (as detailed in the Education Funding Agency's Section 251 Guidance to Local Authorities for 2015-2016). Permission for such expenditure of the DSG must be obtained from the Secretary of State.
- 29 Section 8(9) of the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 states that subject to specific provisions (not relevant to this report) all members of the Schools Forum are entitled to vote on all matters. Section 8(11) further states that subject the specific provisions (not relevant to this report) members may determine their own voting procedure.

Risk Management

- 30 The education function within the MASH is a key part of its success. The issue highlighted in the report is how to fund this function, alongside how to improve it. The proposal also contains the suggestion of a service level agreement if secretary of state approval is not granted.

Consultees

- 31 Schools and Early Years settings were invited to respond to the questionnaire evaluating the Education Safeguarding Officer post.
- 32 Meetings were also held with the Headteachers who devised the role and key staff with the MASH.

Appendices

- None

Background Papers

- Schools revenue funding 2015 to 2016 Operational Guide Version 1: July 2014: Education Funding Agency.