



f40 Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 9, 2025 – online only

1. Attendances, apologies, and changes to committee membership

Present: Cllr Alex Dale (f40 Chair and Derbyshire CC); Jayne Kirkham MP (Labour Vice Chair); Karen Westcott (f40 Secretary); Phil Haslett (Dep Chair and Gloucestershire CC); Andrew Minall (Hampshire CC); Margaret Judd (Dorset Council); Jackie Fieldwick (Brunel MAT & Uplands Enterprise Trust); Emily Jones (Deputy Chair and NAHT); Cllr Victoria Aitken (East Riding of Yorkshire Council); Carole Thomson (Oxfordshire Schools Forum); Ed Francis (Worcestershire SEND primary headteacher); Cllr Lois Samuel (Devon CC); Cllr Bryony Goodliffe (Cambridgeshire CC); Jon Millin (Glos Primary Heads Association); Rachael Adler (Hertfordshire CC); Michael Freeston (EYA); Charlotte Harding (NGA); Cllr Samantha Gethen (Solihull Council); Clive Harris (LGA); Cllr Elaine Lynch (Cumberland Council); Cllr Fiona Baker (West Northamptonshire Council); Julia Harnden (ASCL); Amelia Walker (Somerset CC); Cllr Andrew Leadbetter (Devon CC); Cllr John Howson (Oxfordshire CC); Les Hall (Cornwall Council); Matthew Booth (education consultant); Dan Careless (education consultant).

Apologies: Sarah Dyke MP (Lib Dem Vice Chair); Sarah Burns (Cheshire East headteacher/School Forum Chair); Cllr Bob Standley (East Sussex CC); Emma Balchin (NGA); Cllr Laura Mayes (Wiltshire); Julia Grainger (Suffolk CC); Cllr Jonathan Price (Staffs CC).

AD welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially those who were attending for the first time.

A number of people said they had meetings to attend later that morning, but they would stay in the f40 online meeting for as long as they could.

2. Presentation on the development of a national HNB management plan

Education consultants Dan Careless and Matthew Booth, who have worked with both Derbyshire County Council and Wokingham Council, gave a presentation on a new High Needs Block (HNB) management plan they have developed to assist local authorities meet the rising need in SEND support within their stretched budgets.

They said they were about to start trialling the plan with some local authorities and were also preparing to meet with the Department for Education to discuss its benefits.

The management plan involves the use of an all-through banding approach to identifying needs and agreeing support, using a partnership approach and then agreement between parents, schools and local authorities.

The programme sets out a three-stage plan to ensure that everyone is on the same page about the identification of needs, how support is agreed and evaluated, and how it is implemented and adapted.

A copy of the slides can be found [here](#)

f40 members who wish to discuss the management plan with Matthew and Dan further to find out more, should complete this online form [here](#).

Members asked a number of questions at the end of the presentation. MB suggested that LAs needed to articulate with heads about the notional SEN budget and how it was spent, and help to gain clarity about why it exists and how it fits with SEN support in schools. He said pre-EHCP banding helps to assess needs against criteria in mainstream and also helps to define what is a health issue at an earlier stage.

3. Minutes

- Last Executive meeting held on October 15, 2024 – Agreed
- Amended minutes of Executive meeting held on July 15, 2024 – Agreed

4. Matters to be noted

- MPs' briefing in Westminster on SEND in October 2024

AD said the MPs' briefing at Portcullis House in Westminster had been well attended with almost 80 MPs or their representatives attending, with good debate and many MPs asking questions. He said MPs seemed very interested to understand more about the SEND crisis and were highly engaged, and found the latest research on SEND, carried out by Isos Partnership on behalf of the Local Government Association and County Councils Network, interesting.

A copy of the presentation slides can be found [here](#):

- Webinar held in December for f40 members

AD said a webinar was held for f40 members in December to present the same Isos Partnership research, which had been well received, with around 50 people attending.

You can watch the full webinar lasting around 90 minutes [here](#)

5. f40 conference – March 11, 2025

KW updated members on the detail of the f40 conference.

KW said the conference was being held at the LGA in Westminster, from 10am until 4.30pm, with opportunities for networking both at the start and end of the day. Lunch and refreshments would be provided.

KW said many of the speakers and panellists had been agreed and the final details would be circulated in due course after the team had worked through the detail.

She said members who wished to attend the conference had to secure their place through Eventbrite via <https://f402025.eventbrite.co.uk>

KW said there would be a panel debate looking at what good mainstream education looks like and how we can improve inclusion. A number of people would be involved in the panel, including headteachers and representatives from a local authority, Early Years Alliance, the National Governance Association, and the Disabled Children's Partnership.

There would also be a panel discussion on the quantum and fairness of funding, along with a session on the future of education from the political field.

KW said at the last meeting members had suggested some video footage be captured of young people talking about what education meant to them, to ensure that young people were included in the conference.

KW asked if any member local authorities had suitable video footage that could be sent to her in the next week or so for consideration. If suitable video footage could not be found, VA suggested her local authority's videographer could work with a local school to capture some interviews.

Action: Any members with suitable video footage of children and young people to send it to KW by w/c January 27.

Action: If suitable footage cannot be found, KW to work with the Executive on draft questions for young people and then liaise with VA over filming.

Action: KW to circulate the full itinerary for the conference in due course.

6. f40 submission to the new SEND inquiry

AD said f40 had been approached by the Education Select Committee, inviting the group to provide evidence to an inquiry into the SEND crisis they had launched. He said the deadline for submissions was January 30.

AD said some members of the Executive had met the day previously to discuss f40's submission.

PH outlined the thoughts behind f40's submission, as follows:

EJ said the Education Select Committee had made it clear that they wanted suggestions and solutions, more than complaints, and had also stipulated a 3,000-word maximum.

PH said f40 would be suggesting:

- Increased funding in mainstream schools and for specialist provision.
- Fairer funding through reforming the funding system, including the removal of Notional Funding for SEND, the proxy factors in the National Funding Formula, and the Minimum Per Pupil Funding Level.
- Additional capital funding for both mainstream and specialist provision.
- Supporting schools to be more inclusive of all pupils, including those with SEND, by providing schools with guidance, training, resources and support around the ordinarily available support that should be available in every school. This would level the playing field between schools and instil confidence in parents that their children's needs can be met locally.
- Inclusive support in mainstream schools be built-in to their culture and curriculum, rather than bolted on separately.
- Clear expectations for schools on what they should be delivering to enable all schools to be held accountable.
- Expansion of the curriculum to ensure it better meets the needs of all pupils, especially those who are not academic or who have special needs and for whom GCSEs are not accessible.
- School admissions for pupils with SEND be put back into local authority control.
- School placements are based on a 'local provision for local children' basis, with children attending their local school.
- Legislation be introduced to better regulate the independent sector to ensure quality and value for money.
- Greater partnership-working between education and health, with the NHS providing ring-fenced funding towards SEND support.

- Deficit SEND budgets be written off by Government.

JHo said he was concerned about recruitment and retention, both in schools and within support services, as ensuring roles were filled with the right experienced people was not within the gift of the DfE and currently there were too many vacant roles.

AW said she believed two gateways needed to shut to help stem the SEND crisis – that of EHCPs and the current admissions system. She said changing both of those systems would have an immediate impact and would help to halt the crisis. She said urgent action was needed now – it could not wait.

AW said naming an educational setting in an EHCP left local authorities with little scope when agreeing support for a child. She said children with SEND should go through the same admissions process as mainstream pupils.

PH agreed and said just changing admissions would make a big difference. However, he said it may require legislative change to make it happen.

AW also said if schools were given guidance on the ordinarily available support they should be providing, along with funding, resources and training, then schools would be less able to say they could not meet the needs of a child. She said there had been an unprecedented rise in children requiring SEND support in recent years.

EJ agreed that all schools should be equally as inclusive, but said funding and resources had not kept pace with the number of children needing support, so there were occasions where they simply they could not cope and could not meet a child's needs.

EJ said due to a lack of specialist places, there were many occasions where mainstream schools were simply 'holding' children because there was nowhere else for them to go. She said it was not beneficial to the child, school or other pupils in the class.

EJ agreed that Government needed to make changes on both the EHCP and admissions systems but said it needed to be done with legislation, otherwise decisions would continue to be appealed at tribunal.

CH said the NGA had carried out its annual survey – and had pulled together their own detailed breakdown of SEND funding and issues, which she would share with f40.

The results of the survey can be found [here](#)

JF said she could see both sides of the argument. She agreed that the right resources and staffing needed to be in place, but said there was also a need for more specialist places, so children were not left in the wrong environment.

EL said schools sometimes did not see children in need of SEND support as their responsibility, and introducing clear expectations and accountability would change that. MJ agreed.

AW said the level of need had increased so much that mainstream schools needed to be different and needed to meet the majority of needs. She said specialist schools had their place for those with the most complex needs, but times had changed.

Action: KW to draft the submission for the Education Select Committee and circulate it to the wider Executive committee for their feedback.

7. Latest on emerging policy changes

PH said his authority was part of the DfE's Change Programme for SEND and he was feeling a lot more optimistic that the crisis in SEND would be tackled.

He said he believed it wasn't something that could happen overnight, but he believed the Government was now on the right path and moving towards key changes. However, he said it would not happen without sufficient funding, and he was waiting to see what the Comprehensive Spending Review brought in the spring.

PH said he believed the DfE had a pathway and a long-term view on what needed to happen, but it came with caveats around funding and would require them to be bold and brave in their decisions.

BG said unless the SEND crisis was dealt with, two thirds of local authorities – those with the biggest SEND deficits – would become bankrupt, so a solution needed to be found.

EH said the lack of involvement from the Health sector continued to be a huge concern. She said Health seemed reluctant to put money in to support children with SEND and she hoped the Government would address the issue.

PH said SEND was not a priority for the NHS – they were more focused on waiting lists and A&E – but maybe it was time that Health provided ring-fenced funding for SEND.

JHa said in the Change Programme there often seemed to be inconsistencies in the use of language and terminologies around SEND, and things were often open to interpretation. For example, she asked if everyone had the same interpretation of 'inclusion', as it could mean different things to different people.

PH agreed and said that was one of the problems he saw with the national framework. He said every school was slightly different so inclusion for every school would be different.

8. Letter for members/Governors/schools to share with local MPs about education funding and reform

KW said this was still on her radar and she would draft a letter and share it with the Executive and the NGA to gain feedback.

She said the idea was that the letter could be personalised by schools and sent to their local MPs, urging them to press for increased and fairer education funding and urgent reform in SEND

KW said she would liaise with CH of the NGA over the content of the letter.

Action: KW to draft the letter and circulate it to members for their feedback.

9. Finances, membership, and annual subscriptions for 2025

KW said the f40 bank account was healthy, and it was time for the Executive to agree the subscription fee for the year ahead – 2025/26. Invoices will be sent to members at the beginning of April.

Members of the Executive discussed possible subscription fees for the year ahead.

The consensus was that the subscription fee should either stay the same, at £1,400 per year, or increase to £1,500. This, they said, would allow for f40 to maintain its level of funding at this pivotal time – early in the new Government's administration – and allow for a

reserve fund, which the administrating local authority, Derbyshire County Council, is keen for f40 to do.

Members voted on the two options:

£1,400 = 4 votes in favour

£1,500 = 12 votes in favour

It was agreed that the annual subscription for the year ahead would rise to £1,500.

Action: KW to invoice members as agreed in April 2025.

10. Date of next committee meeting – in-person, following f40 conference on Tuesday, March 11, 2025

KW said the next meeting would be held in person at the LGA following the conference, from 4.30pm until 5.30pm.

Action: KW to notify members and organise the agenda.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

Ends