



## **f40 Executive Committee Meeting**

**Monday, January 19, 2026 – in-person and online**

### **1. Attendances, apologies, and changes to committee membership**

**Present:** Cllr Alex Dale (f40 Chair and Derbyshire); Phil Haslett (Dep Chair and Gloucestershire); Andrew Minall (Hampshire); Margaret Judd (formerly Dorset); Jackie Fieldwick (Brunel MAT & Uplands Enterprise Trust); Cllr Victoria Aitken (East Riding of Yorkshire); Bruce Parvin (Northumberland); Natalie Smith (Hampshire); Cllr George Finch (Warwickshire); Cllr Wayne Briggs (Warwickshire); Rachael Adler (Hertfordshire); Ellen Eager (Dorset); Cllr Hilary Frank (Cornwall); Sal Thirlway (Cheshire West and Chester); Ed Francis (Worc SEND Head); Cllr Karen Grinsell (Solihull); Daniel Newbolt (Central Beds); Julia Grainger (Suffolk); Cllr Bob Standley (East Sussex); Cllr Elaine Lynch (Cumberland); Cllr Jonny Edge (Cambridgeshire); Julie Fellowes (Assoc of Glos Heads); Kerry Cunningham (Assoc of Glos Heads); Julia Harnden (ASCL); Kate Robertson (DTW); Jon Rallings (CCN); Emma Balchin (NGA); Karen Westcott (f40 Secretary).

**Apologies:** Carole Thomson (Oxfordshire Schools Forum); Charlotte Harding (NGA); Sam Henson (NGA); Jon Millin (Glos Heads Assoc); Les Hall (Cornwall); Cllr Andrew Reid (Suffolk); Amelia Walker (Somerset); Michael Freeston (EYA).

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

### **2. Minutes of last Executive meeting held on October 21, 2025 – approved.**

### **3. Matters to be noted:**

- Possible meeting with Sec of State for Education Bridget Philipson and Vice Chair Jayne Kirkham MP – noted
- Approach from Tim Rocca MP about setting up an f40 APPG – noted – awaiting a meeting
- JF speaking at Westminster Education Forum policy conference: Next steps for SEND provision in England (27 Feb) – noted
- AD to draft a motion for all f40 local authorities to support around increased and fairer education funding, and the need for brave and bold reform and funding in SEND – noted

### **4. SEND and unfairness campaign week – Jan 19, 2026**

KW outlined the f40 campaign, which was launching that day with a drop-in event in Westminster for MPs around the need for increased and fairer education funding, along with major change and funding in SEND.

AD thanked KW and other Executive members for their time and effort on the campaign.

VA said the campaign had worked well, and the materials produced by f40 had been well received by local authorities, particularly by the communications teams. She asked if KW could share materials with them again each year to share f40 messaging and encourage

them to raise awareness of the issues with unfair funding. She said it would be beneficial to repeat the campaign each year.

AD suggested f40 arrange an online webinar for communications teams, to share information about f40 and its campaign messaging and to encourage their involvement and support.

**Action:** KW to arrange an online webinar for local authority communications teams and Cabinet Members.

**NB: Post meeting note:** The campaign week went very well, as follows:

- 53 MPs or their representatives attended the drop-in event
- 93 pieces of national and regional coverage was secured about f40's funding campaign and the SEND reforms, including on national BBC TV news, in Schools Week and Room151. Numerous pieces of regional coverage were secured by f40 member authorities on TV, radio and in newspapers
- Questions asked in the House of Commons education debate
- Social posts garnering support from f40, MPs, and local authority members
- Letter template circulated to schools that they and their governing bodies could send to their local MP – also circulated by the NGA.
- f40 pin badges provided to f40 MPs and Cabinet Members

## **5. Creation new suggested funding formulae – noted**

MJ updated members of the Executive on the work she had been doing with AM on creating a new suggested funding formula for both schools and SEND. We hope to present the funding formula briefing paper to the DfE in the coming months.

The new formula and briefing paper will be presented to the Executive in due course and shared with members.

## **6. f40 survey on education funding, budgets and bandings – update (AM/MJ)**

MJ shared information and some interim slides on the SEND funding survey that f40 carried out in autumn 2025, which is feeding into her wider work on the funding formula. MJ, AM and other members of the Finance Managers Research Team (FMRT) have more work to do around the survey results and the new funding formula and will present back to the Executive and the wider membership later in 2026.

She said the results had shown that most f40 local authorities had a DSG deficit.

VA said in the East Riding of Yorkshire, 20% of pupils had a SEND need. She said it was worrying that so many local authorities had deficits, with the combined deficit across England increasing by £1bn in a year. VA said it was the lowest funded authorities for education that were struggling the most and had the biggest deficits. She said if all local authorities received the same levels of lower funding, the accumulated combined deficit would be much greater.

PH said those authorities involved in the Safety Valve programme had tried to reduce their deficits with money provided by Government, but the scheme had not done anything to slow the growth of deficits. He said there had not been any assessment of how successful the Safety Valve programme had been.

JR said the Safety Valve programme had forced some local authorities to pay some of their deficits off using their reserves, when others not included in the programme had not. He said the County Councils Network (CCN), like f40, was asking for the deficits to be paid off by

Government, but CCN was also asking for local authorities to be compensated if they had used their reserves to pay down their debts.

PH said he was concerned that if Government took financial responsibility for SEND from 2028, like Government had suggested, it would lead to the detachment of delivery of SEND support from the fiscal responsibility of it, which could create added pressure for local authorities.

PH said the cost of home to school transport, most of which was linked to SEND support, had increased enormously and if Government was taking fiscal responsibility for SEND, it should also take control of home to school transport.

PH said whoever was responsible for providing provision should also carry responsibility for the funding as they needed to be linked.

A number of members of the Executive said their local authorities had been looking at how to use or amend bandings to determine the levels of SEND support that should be provided to children in order to better manage the funding and costs. However, they said it was very difficult and some had been unable to implement new bandings.

JF said costs were constantly going up in SEND provision and the National Funding Formula needed to be greatly improved to ensure local authorities had equitable and increased funding before national bandings could work.

JF said it was the most difficult environment to work in, with more complex needs among children and young people and ever-rising costs. She said creating a banding and funding system that reflected the current environment would be challenging. She also said every local authority area had different banding levels, so agreeing a national approach would be extremely difficult.

PH said most local authorities had banding systems, but the reason they did not work was because there was insufficient money to meet need.

AD said if Government was going to take responsibility for SEND costs from 2028, it would need to put a national funding policy in place too.

AM said the DfE had looked at creating a national banding system for years, but it had never been implemented because it was simply too difficult.

JF said when Government published the Schools White Paper and SEND reforms, it needed to make sure that children and improved outcomes were at the heart of them. She said she believed in inclusion, but only if it meant children properly belonged and were not segregated. She said just because something was cheaper did not make it right. She said mainstream schools needed to be fully inclusive and properly funded.

JR said the current mainstream system was not able to cope with what was required of it and was unable to provide the level of support needed. He said mainstream schools were not delivering for most children, and the secondary school system was in crisis. He said outcomes were falling while more and more money was being spent. He said a national conversation was needed about how schools could be more inclusive and engaging for young people.

NS said the point of education was to prepare children for adulthood and to help them gain the skills they needed for life and having them sat in a car or bus for an hour to get to a placement away from their home was not in their best interests.

PH said more money could be invested in mainstream schools if less was spent on expensive, out-of-area independent placements.

AM said the number of educational psychologists working in the sector had not kept pace with the level of need. And AD said the number of employees working in EHCP teams within local authorities was also not sufficient to meet the rise in the number of children being assessed for EHCPs. They said the system could not cope with the level of demand.

## **7. Campaign plan / Collaboration Group**

Members said the longer Government took to publish its Schools White Paper and SEND reforms, the longer children would wait for additional support and the greater the deficits would be. RA said local authorities had growing deficits and needed to set new budgets for the year, and delays to the White Paper created enormous challenges.

It was agreed that the f40 campaign plan for the year be agreed once the White Paper and SEND reforms were published.

AM suggested f40 regroup with other organisations involved in education (the Collaboration Group) to discuss areas of shared concern. He said it would be beneficial if they could combine their efforts in the campaign for major reform and increased funding.

It was agreed that f40 should approach the key contacts in the Collaboration Group to see if a meeting could be arranged. It was suggested that a representative from the Society of County Treasures be invited to attend, along with the key parent/carer groups.

**Action:** KW to liaise with Collaboration group members to arrange a meeting.

## **8. Financial update**

KW said f40 had a healthy bank balance.

## **9. Annual subscription fee 2026-27**

KW said the f40 annual subscriptions for 2026-27 were due in April. She asked members to consider what they felt this year's annual subscription for local authority members should be.

AD said with the publication of the Schools White Paper and SEND reforms, there would be a lot of campaigning to do this year. He said f40 was also investing the time and expertise to develop a new suggested funding formula for both schools and SEND. He suggested the annual subscription remain at the same level of last year at £1,500.

Members agreed the subscription fee should remain at £1,500 for each local authority.

**Action:** KW to invoice members in April.

## **10. Date of next Executive Committee meeting – suggest in-person in late April (TBC)**

KW suggested the next Executive Committee meeting be held in mid-April.

AD said if the Schools White Paper was published by then, it may be worth organising another drop-in event for MPs to discuss the Paper and SEND reforms and where f40 had concerns.

It was agreed that a date would be set nearer the time once it became clear when the new education policies would be released.

**Action:** KW to circulate the details for the next meeting in due course.

**NG: Post meeting note:** The Schools White Paper and SEND reforms were published on February 23, 2026.

## **11. Any other business**

There was no other business.

## **Ends**

### **Disclaimer**

These minutes reflect open and honest discussion among education leaders about the need for fairer and increased education funding and urgent reform and investment in the SEND system. Contributions reflect a shared commitment to improving outcomes for all children and young people, particularly those with the highest needs. Where reform is discussed, it is in the context of creating a system that is better funded, more inclusive, and more effective for children and families.