

## SCHOOLS FORUM



Report Subject	Innovation Fund
Meeting Date	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive Summary	<p>This report provides further information relating to the proposals for the use of the £2.8 million Innovation Fund.</p> <p>The Fund was previously proposed as a way to provide support to mainstream schools to enable them to successfully maintain more placements for pupils with SEND in their mainstream settings to reduce the number of new ECHNAs and use of Alternative Provision where possible. This report includes the content of those proposals, the breakdown of the financial costs, and potential consequences from the decision made by Schools Forum.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that Schools Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Note the information in the report,</li><li>- Recommend agreement for provision of the £2.8 million funding for BCP Council to proceed with the proposed actions including a preference in the presented training options,</li><li>- consider the benefits of agreeing ongoing funding for the Inclusion Consultant roles as opposed to restricting the funding to one year and repeated approvals where posts would have to remain fixed term for short periods, reducing the potential pool of candidates who would apply, and</li><li>- consider the context of the current landscape when making its recommendation in relation to the Innovation Fund. If it considers recommending against the Innovation Fund, this report recommends that Schools Forum will need to consider what it sees as the alternative solution to the Innovation Fund to support the work with mainstream inclusion moving forwards</li></ul>
Reason for recommendations	Schools Forum to be consulted on the £2.8 million Innovation Fund proposals for its recommendation
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Richard Burton, Children and Young People
Corporate Director	Cathi Hadley, Director of Children's Services

Report Authors	Chris Lee, Interim Head of School Inclusion
Wards	Council-Wide
Classification	For Consultation

## Background

1. The £2.8 million Innovation Fund was previously agreed to be considered at the beginning of the financial year 2024-25 to enable BCP Council to provide additional support to mainstream schools in relation to supporting Inclusion.
2. Proposals were co-produced with Schools through a series of workshops and sessions in events such as the Education Conference in June 2024, followed by feedback then being sought via an on-line Microsoft form in September 2024.
3. The proposals were brought to the Schools Forum meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024 as AOB for discussion and requested approval.
4. After initial discussion it was decided by the Schools Forum member present to request the detailed plan to be reported to the Schools Forum meeting to take place on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 for further consideration.

## Proposals

5. The proposals for the Innovation Fund was broken down into 4 different areas of work as follows:
6. **Inclusion Consultants (ICONS)** – a team of experienced practitioners with previous roles as either, for example, SENCO or Educational Psychologist. The team would work under a phase and location-based model, building on the pre-existing model already used with Early Years SENCOs. Each ICON would be assigned to specific schools in a geographic area, to build relationships with their own patches of schools and also build up a knowledge and understand of area specific issues for the schools.
7. Staffing would be broken down as 7 x Primary Aged ICONs, 2 providing further capacity on top of the existing Early Years SENCOs to provide support across Reception and KS1, and the remaining 5 focussing on KS2. There would be 4 Secondary Aged ICONs covering KS3 and 4. 2 x Senior ICONs would provide line management and leadership to the Team as well as carrying their own focused workload.
8. Post costing range would be £49,878- £55,484 plus 32% oncosts for ICON role and £56,976 - £63,748 plus 32% oncosts for Senior ICON role.
9. The ICON role was proposed to provide layers of support linked to the level of support bought from the Traded Offer by the EP service.

10. A Universal Offer for all schools would provide a named ICON for each school as a point of contact for general queries and advice. It would also provide ICON attendance at an annual planning meeting with the school and support to the school within the first two days following a critical incident. School would also be able to access the Graduated Response, and Ordinarily Available Provision information and resources, and the Inclusive Setting Audit tool and Environmental SEND Audit Tool, in line with the EP Traded Offer.
11. Those schools accessing the Foundation level of the Traded Offer would be able to access pupils' specific information, advice and guidance via telephone support, and would have ICON attendance at termly planning meetings. School would be able to access the Annual Whole School SEND Audit tool including the SEND in a Nutshell tool which would enable school to more clearly identify its SEND Cohorts and the priority areas within them. This layer would also provide a pre-agreed number of individual assessments and observations per year from the ICON.
12. The Enhanced level of support would enable school to access the SEND Health Check support from their ICON, serving as an audit and assessment of their current SEND provision, supporting in terms of identifying areas for improvement and a positive tool to prepare for future Ofsted inspection. The support level also provides post-Ofsted inspection support for any SEND improvement points, and dedicated time for whole school development, e.g. strategic work with SENCO/HT regarding the school SEND systems.
13. Separately to the EPS Traded Offer it was also proposed that the ICONs be available to support meetings in relation to EHC Needs Assessments, EHCP Annual Reviews and after decisions by BCP Council not to carry out an EHC Needs Assessment or issue an EHCP.
14. The Service would be line managed within the SEND Strategic Service Area, ensuring strong links with the EP Service and the Early Years Service who both also sit within this area. Recruitment was proposed to have permanent roles apart from 2 ICON roles which could be based on secondments to allow local SENCOs to join the team for an agreed period of time to build their knowledge and practice and enable them to return to their school with their increased skill set at the end of the secondment period.
15. **Training and Development** – The training element was broken down into a number of areas as follows.
16. Whole School SEND -this included:
  - a. Every Leader a Leader of SEND Training which is for Senior Leaders in schools to impact on leadership culture and practice to enable a cascade effect throughout schools.
  - b. Training in delivering Whole School SEND School Reviews for ICONs- Enabling ICONs to conduct SEND Reviews in schools to help improve SEND provision and strategy.
  - c. Free Online CPD and training on Whole School SEND Online for all schools

This all has a proven impact on culture and approaches to SEND in mainstream schools on the leadership teams, working on hearts and minds of School Leaders on the basis that it cascades down throughout the school.

17. Excluded to Included Training (F2F full day training) for schools.

The programme helps schools reduce exclusions by developing an understanding of the factors that affect pupils' behaviours and relationships. Having this understanding of the motivation behind a pupils' actions is key in improving attendance and building positive relationships. It also equips school staff with effective support mechanisms for those navigating potential exclusion.

18. The programme serves as a catalyst for positive change within schools. Ultimately, the programme plays a pivotal role in reshaping the narrative of school environments. With the aim of working towards inclusivity, empathy, and the overall well-being of all students.

This programme has now already taken place, facilitated by the Virtual School, though if approved funding would be provided via the Innovation Fund.

19. Attachment and Trauma (F2F full day training) for schools – this provides schools with the training and tools they need to be attachment and trauma aware so they can create a positive learning environment. Led by experienced attachment and trauma specialists, the course includes practical strategies to help staff better understand and support vulnerable children impacted by trauma and unmet attachment needs. This can help improve attendance and reduce exclusions, while boosting academic engagement and enabling children to achieve their full potential. Teachers and other staff will be more confident in addressing and dealing with attachment and trauma-related issues in education, improving relationships across the school community.

20. Supporting Transitions (webinar half day training) for schools - Looking at the big differences that make transition hard for some pupils and giving schools the guidance and tools to make the experience feel safer and give the children the tools to be successful. This is aimed at increasing the levels of success with transitions between settings for pupils, reducing exclusions, failed placements and attendance issues.

21. Schools were then provided with two options for a training focus:

22. Trauma Informed Schools UK – whole school training – 2 x 3-hour development sessions to be delivered as half-day INSET or twilight sessions to increase whole school awareness of trauma informed theory and practice and how to implement across the setting. This will provide increased understanding of confidence with and support in relation to Trauma across whole staff, improving inclusive practice, a culture of belonging and reducing exclusions, suspensions and poor attendance, resulting in more children thriving in mainstream placements.

23. Alongside this would also be a 2-day Leadership Course to increase senior leadership awareness of trauma informed theory and practice and how to implement system changes across the setting. This would result in increased understanding of, confidence with and support in relation to Trauma across senior leadership in schools, resulting in a systemic and cascade change in school organisations,

improving inclusive practice, a culture of belonging and reducing exclusions, suspensions and poor attendance, resulting in more children thriving in mainstream placements.

24. The alternative was the Youth Mental Health First Aid Champions through Mental Health First Aid England – a one-day face-to-face course or online. Learning takes place through a mix of presentations, group discussions and workshop activities. Numbers are limited to 16 people per course so that the instructor can keep people safe and supported while they learn. This is intended to result in the staff having:
  - a. an understanding of common mental health issues and how they can affect young people
  - b. Ability to spot signs of mental ill health in young people and guide them to a place of support
  - c. Knowledge and confidence to advocate for mental health awareness
  - d. Skills to support positive wellbeing
25. This option would also include MHFA England Instructor Training Programme - An online welcome session with the MHFA England team to give you an overview of the programme and answer any queries you may have. Six days of training delivered by two experienced MHFA England National Trainers split over a few weeks. All relevant training materials, including your instructor kit. Access to MHFAider® support and benefits, including the MHFAider Support App®. Support from a National Trainer mentor during your sign-off period. Access to the Instructor Member dashboard, filled with regularly updated supporting resources and documents to help you carry out your role effectively. The ICONs would access this training to ensure sustainability of roll out of the Mental Health First Aid course.
26. **Additional Outreach Supplement** - Additional funding of £500,000 would be set aside through the Innovation Fund to increase the capacity of Outreach Support based on feedback at workshops and Education Conference including to support further BOOST training. Additional outreach support through BOOST funding would provide further layers of training and support for mainstream schools from outreach providers, increasing schools' ability to support pupils in mainstream reducing exclusions, suspensions etc.
27. **Innovation Projects** - Funding allocated for mainstream schools to be able to submit bids/EOI as to how they can use it to support cohorts of children within their settings in new ways where without this funding they would otherwise have struggled to meet their needs in mainstream. This funding would enable a minimum of 11 projects based on £100,000 per bid. However, larger bids could also be considered where they demonstrate wider impact.
28. The Innovation Projects process and paperwork for submitting bids would be established once agreement to proceed with the spend was in place.

## **Costings**

29. The table below sets out the summary of costings based upon the Trauma Informed Schools option for training.

Element	Impact Sought	Costs
Inclusion Consultants	Increased Advice and Support to mainstream schools resulting in greater ability and confidence with increased numbers of pupils with SEND successfully remaining in mainstream	£874,644 - £973,921
Every Leader a Leader of SEND - Whole School SEND Training for schools	Change of culture in leadership of schools and increased confidence and ability to meet need in mainstream	£1,500
SEND Review Training – Whole School SEND for Inclusion Consultants	Upskilling of ICONs to enable them to deliver SEND reviews of School SEND systems and processes.	£1200 x 11 = £13,200 + Trainer expenses
Excluded to Included Training (F2F full day training) for schools	Change of culture and awareness in relation to exclusions and increasing belonging/inclusion behaviours by schools	£2,000 +VAT + Trainer expenses
Attachment and Trauma (F2F full day training) for schools	Increased awareness of attachment and trauma-based practice for SENCOs and DTs	£1,200 + VAT + Trainer expenses
Supporting Transitions (webinar half day training) for schools	Increased awareness of how to support children through transitions, improving their successes and reducing negative experiences.	£850 +VAT
Trauma Informed Schools UK – whole school training 2 x 3-hour sessions for schools	Increased awareness and improved practice across whole staff groups in all schools in relation to trauma informed practice	£1990 x 98 schools = £195,020
Trauma Informed Schools UK – 2-day Leadership Course for schools	Support senior leads in schools to implement trauma informed practices into their schools, resulting in reductions in suspensions and exclusions, the frequency of challenging behaviour and improved educational outcomes	£3,100 for 40 delegates x 5 cohorts = £15,500 + venue hire
Outreach supplement	Increase outreach offer and access to outreach training- supporting inclusive practice in staff	£500,000
Innovation Fund	Supporting mainstream schools to be innovative in their approaches to meeting pupil need, resulting in increased inclusion, reduced exclusions, suspensions, specialist placements.	~£1,100,000

30. The next table sets out costs if the option of Mental Health First Aiding is chosen:

Element	Impact Sought	Costs
Inclusion Consultants	Increased Advice and Support to mainstream schools resulting in greater ability and confidence with increased numbers of pupils with SEND successfully remaining in mainstream	£874,644 - £973,921
Every Leader a Leader of SEND - Whole School SEND Training for schools	Change of culture in leadership of schools and increased confidence and ability to meet need in mainstream	£1,500
SEND Review Training – Whole School SEND for Inclusion Consultants	Upskilling of ICONs to enable them to deliver SEND reviews of School SEND systems and processes.	£1200 x 11 = £13,200 + Trainer expenses

Excluded to Included Training (F2F full day training) for schools	Change of culture and awareness in relation to exclusions and increasing belonging/inclusion behaviours by schools	£2,000 +VAT + Trainer expenses
Attachment and Trauma (F2F full day training) for schools	Increased awareness of attachment and trauma-based practice for SENCOs and DTs	£1,200 + VAT + Trainer expenses
Supporting Transitions (webinar half day training) for schools	Increased awareness of how to support children through transitions, improving their successes and reducing negative experiences.	£850 +VAT
MHFA Training for all schools	Increased awareness, improved practice and qualified mental health first aiders across all schools	£200 per person – 5 people per school = £1000 per school x 98 schools = £98,000
MHFA England Instructor Training Programme	Long term sustainability of delivery of MHFA training to ensure schools can replace staff skills when staff leave	£2500 per person plus £200 for initial training – 11 x ICONs trained to deliver = £29,700
Outreach supplement	Increase outreach offer and access to outreach training- supporting inclusive practice in staff	£500,000
Innovation Fund	Supporting mainstream schools to be innovative in their approaches to meeting pupil need, resulting in increased inclusion, reduced exclusions, suspensions, specialist placements.	~£1,205,400

31. Costing consideration – The ICON roles are proposed to be permanent roles within the structure to enable recruitment of high-quality staff and to provide stability to the system. This carries with it the consequences of a year-on-year cost against the intended funding stream. **This report recommends Schools Forum consider the benefits of this as opposed to restricting the funding to one year and repeated approvals where posts would have to remain fixed term for short periods, reducing the potential pool of candidates who would apply.**
32. The timeline for this work is amended compared to the original proposals due to the slippage in the proposals being agreed for implementation.
33. **This report recommends that Schools Forum consider agreement with the proposals for the use of the Innovation Fund as set out in this report, and that the Forum recommends a choice of option in the training part of the proposals between Trauma Informed training or Mental Health First Aid approaches.**
34. If agreement was now given to proceed, the ICON element would be discussed at the next Corporate Management Board in January/February 2025 for agreement there before proceeding for recruitment. The approval may also need to be agreed by full Council due to financial regulations relating to the amount involved. This would mean that at best if recruitment could take place in a timely way, if successful candidates were to serve notice with any pre-existing schools an earliest start date would be Summer Term 2025, however this may slip to the following term depending on speed of processes.
35. Training elements would still be able to be rolled out across the 24-25 academic school year and continue into the new academic year. Outreach elements would be built into the financial year of funding 25-26 as would the use of funding for Innovation bids given the time required for bids to be received and approved. The

bidding system would be shared and bids received before Easter 2025, to enable approvals and funding to be allocated from Summer Term 2025.

### **Impact of non-agreement**

36. Schools Forum are recommended to carefully consider the potential impact of the proposals not being agreed on the SEND systems in BCP. Through various workshops, Conferences and briefing sessions, Head Teachers and SENCOs have consistently raised concerns over their capacity and ability to support pupils within SEN Support status and EHCP SEND in their mainstream settings without further support and training being provided to them.
37. It has been apparent through data sources shared cross the past academic year that the demand on the SEND system continues to rise across, EHCP numbers, the use of AP placements alongside the use of specialist provision, including higher cost independent and non-maintained special schools. Schools are stating that this is because there is insufficient earlier resource. This is therefore a partnership agreement to seek to address and support families earlier and support school settings and the workforce.
38. If this continues to be the case, the system will continue to see greater amounts of funding allocated to these other placements and increasingly smaller amounts available for mainstream support. BCP's financial difficulties with its High Needs Budget are already clear, with projections for the In Year deficit reaching close to £19 million. Unless additional support and focus is given to supporting mainstream inclusion this pattern is unlikely to change.
39. **Schools Forum is recommended to consider this element to the current landscape when making its recommendation in relation to the Innovation Fund. If it considers recommending against the Innovation Fund, this report recommends that Schools Forum will need to consider what it sees as the alternative solution to the Innovation Fund to support the work with mainstream inclusion moving forwards.**