

## **Medical Needs Education & Reintegration Service (MNERS):**

### **Traded service proposal – initial summary/discussion paper**

#### **Introduction:**

MNERS is a Local Authority (LA) tuition service providing medical tuition (via Hospital School function) for pupils referred by their on-roll school and who are absent from their usual school due to diagnosed medical reasons. MNERS discharges part of Wiltshire Council's duties under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to "make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them".

This LA duty applies to children and young people (CYP) of compulsory school age who are ordinarily resident in Wiltshire, including those who attend an out of area school and/or independent sector school.

MNERS is a small team and covers the Wiltshire Council/LA geographical area in its entirety. The staff group comprises 3 FTE x QTS (Qualified Teaching Status), working with additional Support Worker (Teaching Assistant) level staff. MNERS provides tuition in core subjects only via direct (live) online small group lessons delivered by MNERS Teachers and/or in conjunction with an approved external provider (Academy 21). MNERS also has a small fleet of AV1 robots. In addition, MNERS also provides Hospital School support for in-patient pupils of compulsory school age at Salisbury District Hospital, Sarum Ward.

#### **Proposal:**

The Local Authority wishes to move to a traded (charged) model for the delivery of MNERS tuition to pupils referred by their on-roll school. Charges for MNERS would be based on the per pupil Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) funding received by schools. The proposed charges to schools would include an initial period of support, which would not be charged.

#### **Rationale:**

MNERS has seen a significant increase in pupil numbers, over recent academic years (AYs):

AY	Total pupils* engaged with MNERS support (including pupils with a closed MNERS Support Episode):
2022-23	53
2023-24	83
2024-25	YTD 104

\*Note: pupils accessing MNERS AY may have been referred during previous AY/s. Data based on LL/EYES data Episode Commencement to End Episode only (excludes Enquiry stage)

Whilst previous MNERS referral numbers have in the main been manageable, the introduction of charges for medical tuition delivered by through MNERS is viewed as a necessary development to enable the service to respond to rising demand (e.g. through increased QTS staffing and other resources, such as use of AV1 robots); and will also bring Wiltshire schools into greater alignment with neighbouring and other LAs where medical tuition support is charged.

#### **Context:**

In December 2023, the Department for Education issued updated statutory guidance to LA's (and schools) on "Arranging education for children who cannot attend school due to health needs". This document includes the following with regard to funding:

"Alternative provision for children with medical needs is funded from local authorities' high needs budgets. However, where a child remains on the roll of their home school but requires a period of time in alternative provision due to their health needs, the local authority and home school may wish to consider the transfer of a portion of the school's funding associated with that child to the alternative provision. This would ensure that the funding follows the child.

This arrangement would cease when the child is reintegrated back to their home school or are no longer on the roll of the home school”

Wiltshire Council does not currently charge for medical needs tuition provision. A wide range of medical tuition (Hospital School) delivery and provision arrangements are in place in other LAs. The following local LAs have charging mechanisms in place for their medical tuition arrangements: Swindon, B&NES, South Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, (list not exhaustive).

### Initial costings/income illustrations:

#### 1) Medical Tuition costs to schools:

It is proposed that an initial free period of MNERS support (8 weeks) would be offered, followed by a chargeable period which would be levied at 50% of the allocated AWPU funding, per pupil. Note: 50% AWPU recovery is suggested as an initial base figure and may increase.

Example: Based on a pupil being open to MNERS for a 6-month\* period (26 weeks, based on 52-week calendar year), the service charge to a school would apply as follows:

- **Primary phase:** Annual AWPU (per pupil) = £3847.00 / 52 weeks calendar year = £73.98 pw.  
**6 mths MNERS Medical Tuition cost = £665.82** (£73.98 x 18 weeks (initial 8 weeks gratis) = £1331.64 x 50% = £665.82)
- **Secondary phase:** av. Annual AWPU (per pupil KS3 or 4) = £5767.50 / 52 wks calendar year = £110.91 pw.  
**6 mths MNERS Medical Tuition cost = £998.19** (£110.91 x 18 weeks (initial 8 weeks gratis) = £1996.38 x 50% = £998.19)
- (Average annual AWPU (per pupil) across Primary & Secondary phase:  
£5127.33 / 52 weeks calendar year = £98.60 pw. Therefore, 50% AWPU p pupil, p week = £49.30)
- Note: Year 11 pupils referred from January/T3 of an AY for MNERS support, will incur a flat charge rate of c.25% annual AWPU without gratis period – due to immediacy of provision requirements for GCSE preparation

#### 2) Potential (estimated) income generated to LA:

\*Please note: pupils may be open to MNERS for shorter/longer than a 6-month period. Due to the way LA data is currently collected, MNERS Open Episode weeks incorporate school closure periods (across calendar year). Therefore *actual* MNERS income estimates (modelled using AWPU p.pupil/p.week figures, on a TTO/39-week AY basis), can be provided in due course, as required.

Using an average (across Primary & Secondary phase) weekly (50%) AWPU per pupil charge (across a calendar 52-week year), the following snapshot can be drawn:

AY:	Total MNERS pupils supported:	MNERS Episode length range p pupil (weeks/52):	Average (mean) Episode length p pupil (weeks/52):	Calculation:	**Estimate income generated:
2023-24	83	Between 2 weeks – 140 weeks	39 weeks (less 8-week initial gratis period) = 31 weeks	83 x (31 wks @ 50% AWPU of £49.30 pp, pw)	£126,848.90
2024-25 YTD	104 YTD	Between 1 week – 97 weeks	22 weeks (less 8-week initial gratis period) = 14 weeks	104 x (14 wks @ 50% AWPU of £49.30 pp, pw)	£71,780.80

\*\*Note: figures are estimate as refers to all pupils (including those with a <8-week Episode and Y11 pupils) and based on 52-week calendar year/including school closure weeks.

#### 3) Cost of MNERS Teacher at UPS3 + SEN1:

c.£90,000 (c.£53,000 basic salary with on costs, travel, training and management/admin time)

**Other considerations:**

This proposal is envisioned as a 'cost recovery' model and is not a profit-making approach. If surplus income is generated, a review of future charging arrangements may be considered.

Further options for consideration include:

- Service reinvestment e.g. expansion of existing AV1 fleet to support reintegration
- Consideration of additional subject provision, for suitable pupils
- Additional education resources, including human resources.

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**19/05/25.**