

School resource management adviser programme – 3 years on

The school resource management adviser (SRMA) programme

Following a successful pilot phase in 2017/18, a further 979 establishments, including 79 local authorities, took up the offer to work with a SRMA in the period up to March 2021.

The recent National Audit Office report into the [financial sustainability of schools in England](#) reviewed the overall cost-effectiveness of the programme. This confirmed that SRMAs had identified total potential savings of £303 million and that stakeholders were broadly positive about the school resource management adviser programme.

Our follow up survey received 257 responses from academy trusts and local authorities schools, of which 84% rated the experience of the visit as 'good' or 'very good'.

The head of schools finance at Hackney Council said:

"I would highly recommend the process as both a remedial and preventive measure to help secure the financial health of schools, particularly in authorities carrying surplus pupil places. The SRMA was professional, approachable, flexible and extremely knowledgeable. We would happily have all schools reviewed using this methodology."

The SRMA programme aims to embed financial excellence across the sector and promote the effective use of school resources for the benefit of pupils. Due to the positive impact of the programme in supporting schools to make the best spending decisions, ESFA has [extended the SRMA programme](#) for another 3 years, to August 2024.

During the deployment at Minerva Learning Trust, the SRMA identified a range of cost savings. This highlighted specific areas of development and improvement resulting in expected savings of around £5.2 million over a 3-year period.

[Read more about The Minerva Learning Trust](#)

SRMAs

SRMAs are practising sector experts, such as school business professionals, that work collaboratively with schools and trusts. They provide independent, expert advice and tailored support to address current or future forecast

deficits where these exist. In all cases they help trusts and schools identify opportunities to make better use of their funding, enabling them to target resources where they will have the most impact on outcomes for children.

All deployments include a review of data with school or trust leaders. The SRMA then produces a report which summarises the historical, current and projected state of the budget, as well as an overview of how financial matters are managed at a high level.

Every report should contain an analysis of the budget using the [Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning \(ICFP\)](#) tools. This can be used to make recommendations as to where resources could be reallocated to support school improvement priorities that promote strong educational outcomes. While ICFP tools are important to the way SRMAs approach resource management, it is recognised that one size does not fit all and reports will pay close attention to the unique circumstances and educational priorities of each setting. All recommendations are strictly advisory and there is no obligation to implement them.

The headteacher at St Ives Infant School said:

“The SRMA’s work has saved us weeks of research and time that we simply don’t have at the moment. In many cases we would have not known were to start the research. The impact of personalised support is that we can apply the suggestions with real purpose and be proactive.”

Six months after a deployment, the SRMA will conduct a brief follow up visit to establish which of the recommendations the school or trust has considered appropriate to adopt and to assist with any queries about effective implementation of the recommendations.

Find out more about working with a SRMA

SRMA visits may be requested for a variety of reasons and can also be used as part of a wider package of help, for example supporting schools in regional Opportunity Areas.

Following the positive response from schools that received practical assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, ESFA continues to offer flexible or ‘bespoke’ deployments where there is urgent need for short term, hands-on business support.

ESFA will continue to make SRMA support available to all schools, free of charge and any school that wishes to take up this offer should contact ESFA using the enquiry form.