

West Northants Schools forum: 14 February 2024

Agenda Item 9

High Needs Project Update: SEND Funding Recommendations

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Schools Forum support for the proposed changes to West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) SEND funding processes for top up (element 3). It changes both the administration and funding levels for pupils with SEND.
- 1.2 The funding changes will support children and young people (CYP) with SEND both with and without Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs).
- 1.3 The changes are largely to be implemented from 1 September 2024 (with an earlier adoption for early years providers on 1st April 2024).
- 1.4 EHC Plan funding in this report refers to the Top Up funding (element 3) which is provided by WNC to support EHCPs. This will be delivered through the Education Banding Tool (EBT) for CYP, referred to locally as the RAS (resource allocation system).
- 1.5 Non-EHC pupil funding in this report is referred to as 'Targeted SEND' Funding and was formerly known locally as High Needs Funding. Targeted SEND will continue to be delivered via the existing panel processes but will be more closely linked to the SEND ranges.
- 1.6 The age ranges within the scope of this report refers to CYP in early years and mainstream schools including units only. This is referred to as phase #2 of the project.
- 1.7 SEND funding changes for CYP in Further Education (FE) will be implemented in phase #3 of the WNC SEND Funding Project.
- 1.8 Evaluation of test cases for FE was referred to as phase #1. This was completed in August 2023.
- 1.9 EBT funding RAS rates for Special Schools for 2024-25 were presented to Schools Forum at the December 2023 meeting and are implemented from 1st April. Under the new proposed system, these new rates for special schools will form the basis of funding for all other EHCPs in early years, primary and secondary schools from 1 September 2024.

1.10 Resource Provisions, Hearing Impairment Units, Independent Schools, Elective Home Education (EHE), Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS), and Specialist Post 16 Institutes are out of the funding scope of this report as they are funded through service level agreements. Schools Forum is asked to note that CYP in these settings are however in scope for the implementation of the Needs Profile Forms which is used to support the identification of the Banding Levels within the EBT for all CYP in all types of settings.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Education Skills and Funding Agency confirmed the DSG funding allocations for 2024-25 through the schools, high needs and central schools services national funding formulae (NFF) on 19 December 2024.
- 2.2 In September 2022, WNC established a SEND Funding Steering Group which included representatives from educational settings (schools, colleges, units and early years), SENCOs and representatives from parent / carer forum groups. Additional educational sub-groups were also set up to facilitate more detailed reviews for the early years, mainstream schools and further education sectors.
- 2.3 The key objective of the project team was to create a funding framework whereby the local authority can allocate funds to schools, colleges, units and early years settings in a fairer, more consistent, timely and transparent way based on the needs of CYP.
- 2.4 This framework also needs to support a sustainable funding system that can ensure, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is not overspent over the medium-term financial plan and is able to provide efficient and accurate financial information for multiple purposes.
- 2.5 An additional objective of the project team is the requirement to align SEND funding criteria to the SEND Ranges / Graduated Approach which was launched in November 2022. It was quickly realised that this alignment needs to be across all aspects of administration and funding levels.
- 2.6 The original scope of the project was subsequently extended to include funding administration plus funding criteria and funding levels for children and young people 0 to 25 with and without EHC Plans.
- 2.7 Schools Forum are asked to note that a public consultation took place in September 2023 to sense-check that the project objectives were in alignment with the consultation outcomes. The results of this consultation were presented to Schools Forum at the October 2023 meeting. A fundamental finding was that WNC area stakeholders believe that SEND funding levels should be based on the CYP's level of need.
- 2.8 The funding systems proposed here align the level of need with a rate of funding, the higher the need, the higher the funding rate.
- 2.9 WNC has kept members of the Schools Forum informed about progress of the project and its deliverables since the December 2022 meeting

- 2.10 Deliverables have been co-produced with partners from parent / carer forums (Northamptonshire Parent Forum Group & West Northants Voices in Partnership) and volunteer representatives from education providers in the early years, mainstream schools age and further education sectors.
- 2.11 It is important to note that the proposed funding levels for EBT RAS bands have not yet been taken to the project groups for their input, and this report is the first communication of the proposed funding levels. The rates will be shared with our working groups following the publishing of this document and there will be a full consultation with all sectors affected by these proposals.
- 2.12 Multiple project deliverables are now planned for implementation from 1 April 2024 and are therefore being presented to Schools Forum. These include changes to processes, administration and the funding system.
- 2.13 WNC recognises the financial pressure on schools and education providers and the inconsistency in funding for children with SEND across West Northants. The project partners have reviewed models of funding based on the previous funding rates for all settings, and considered rates that would provide a cut in funding as part of managing the pressure on the High Needs Block, as well as rates that would provide an increase in overall funding.
- 2.14 The project partners agree that cutting the levels of funding at a time when demand for SEND provision is growing, will have a detrimental effect on children and young people. The project partners agree that by investing in local schools and education providers, bringing consistency to funding levels based on need and by providing support through the local SEND Partnership, will improve outcomes for children with SEND within their local communities and will contribute to the balancing of the DSG over the medium-term.

3 Recommendations: Executive Summary

- 3.1 Recommendations are split into two sections to reflect the two different funding types
- 3.1.1 Recommendations : EHC Plan Funding / Education Banding Tool / Resource Allocation System
- 3.1.2 To support the implementation of the EBT in early years and mainstream schools / units, additional funding of approximately £2.3m in the first year is forecast
- This includes payment protection for 3 years
 - All special arrangements related to EHCPs will no longer be supported, but existing arrangements will be supported by payment protection (Some exceptions will still exist)
 - It is estimated that the payback to WNC will be 3.3 years and is based on the savings secured by not placing CYP in independent settings

- We propose the same system to be rolled out to the SEN Units. The increase in funding is not as large proportionally as many schools currently receive a combination of per pupil and lump sum funding to cover the unit costs. The proposed EBT RAS system will standardise the funding method across the EHCP children and young people and will add transparency and speed to the funding system. The forecast increase in cost for the SEN Unit budget in 2024-25 is £0.2m.

3.1.3 Recommendations: Non-EHC Plan Funding / Targeted SEND Funding

- To support the alignment of funding with the SEND Ranges and the strengthening of the short term support for school age CYP without EHCPs, additional funding of £0.33m in the first year is recommended
- For Early Years CYP, an increase of 25% in the hourly rate for SENIF is recommended. This is funded from within existing EY budgets

4 Recommendations: EHC plan funding: Education Banding Tool

- 4.1 In June 2017 NCC introduced the Education Banding Tool for Top Up payments for special schools
- 4.2 Top up funding was based solely on the RAS Bands. Banding ranges were set for Special Schools Primary, Special Schools Secondary and Special Schools Sixth Form. These banding values are reviewed annually and presented to Schools Forum in advance of implementation in the following financial year. The rates for 2024-25 were presented to Forum in December 2023
- 4.3 The use of Needs Profile Forms was then expanded to include all early years and school age children. This included CYP in mainstream schools and the independent sector
- 4.4 The Education Banding Tool is specifically designed as a fair and consistent method to estimate the level of additional funding a child or young person needs to meet their SEND needs and support their outcomes. Imosphere are the owner of this propriety system and work closely as a partner with WNC
- 4.5 From June 2017 a V1.5 Needs Profile Form was completed for all CYP based on the content of the approved EHC Plan. Completion of this form generated a RAS Banding Level. The tool delivers 10 different funding bands which encompass CYP with a wide range of needs including those who may need to attend specialist settings. The indicative band assigned to an individual child is based on the assessed needs of that child. This ensures that funding level is evidence based and consistent across all CYP
- 4.6 Further upgrades of the Needs Profile Form were implemented in August 2017 (V2.0), June 2018 (V3.1) and February 2019 (V3.3)
- 4.7 This provides assurance that the tool will provide a consistent approach, meaning pupils with the similar levels of SEND will receive the same estimated level of top-up funding.

- 4.8 Forum are asked to note that the EBT has the functionality to further breakdown the level of needs into multiple levels for all bands. From band 1 to band 9 there are 3 sub-levels available. eg 3a, 3b, 3c. For band 10 there are 5 sub-bands available 10a, 10b, 10c, 10d & 10e. To reduce additional complexity at the time of the roll out to early years and mainstream schools, WNC have decided not to use here additional banding levels. Banding levels will therefore not be expanded to the 36 available. After the roll out is completed, and after the WNC case management system is upgraded, consideration can then be given to the use of these additional banding levels
- 4.9 For the early years and school age CYP in mainstream schools, this RAS band was then used to support WNC in decision making in relation to the top up funding allocated for CYP with EHC Plans. Current funding levels available are however based on the hours of support needed
- a) Level 1 £1,500
 - b) Level 2 £3,000
 - c) Level 3 £4,500
 - d) Level 4 £6,000
- 4.10 Units at mainstream schools are currently funded differently but are within the scope of this project

Appeals

- 4.11 As with Special Schools there will be both moderation and an appeals process for the RAS levels. A process was implemented for Special Schools to be able providers to appeal the RAS Band Level allocated to the CYP in their setting from the completed and moderated Needs Profile Form.
- 4.12 Forum are asked to note that all Needs Profile Forms were completed by EHC Caseworkers and moderated by EHC Officers. These appeals are facilitated via the relevant EHC Officers and are submitted via a panel process. This type of process is also used by other LAs that use the EBT

Special Arrangements

- 4.13 Currently there are 338 individually tailored arrangements in place for Top Up funding. (This excludes special arrangements for Notional SEN funding) > This represents 9.8% of the current total number of EHC Plans: 3,460.
- 4.14 When the EBT funding is introduced for early years and mainstream schools, it is the objective of WNC is to stop all individually tailored arrangements related to EHC Plans for CYP apart from those who meet the exception criteria (see below).
- 4.15 Payment protection will however be introduced to support existing school budgets. The level of protection for schools will be at the same rate as existing top up funding. This is recommended to be 75%, 50% and 25% for years 1 to 3 of implementation.

Early years and mainstream schools data collection and analysis

- 4.16 In November 2022 existing Banding Levels and funding levels for 601 CYP from early years, mainstream schools and resource units were provided to Imosphere. This represented approximately 40% of the cohort for these sectors. The data collected was analysed by Imosphere, the company that runs the EBT, to provide information to assist with the configuration of the tool i.e. setting the top up values.
- 4.17 Their initial analysis demonstrated very limited correlation between the level of complexity of need and the current spend.
- 4.18 As a result of this limited correlation WNC decided to finalise the creation of V4.1 of the Needs Profile Form and then complete / moderate these for all CYP with EHCPs in parallel to completing financial modelling.

New Needs Profile Form Completion & Moderation

- 4.19 In the first quarter of 2023, the WNC project team worked with members of the education sub-groups to amend and update the V3.3 Needs Profile Form which had been used since February 2019. Input from the sub-groups and members of the EHC team ensured co-production of the WNC v4.1 Needs Profile Form. This included minor amendments to the standard V4.0 from Imosphere On 3 July 2023 this new V4.1 version for was launched within the EBT.

Financial modelling

- 4.20 RAS Band levels from the V4.1 Needs Profile Forms plus the total current funding per CYP were included in the financial modelling. The current funding was compared then to the funding the pupils would receive if moved to a RAS band funding system. Current funding is defined as Top Up funding (element 3) plus any special arrangements individually arranged for pupils or schools as a whole (which was then apportioned to pupils).
- 4.21 The modelling used 723 out of 1,142 (63%) of pupils on the Capita One case management system at the 10th of January.
- 4.22 Schools Forum are asked to note that due to the time constraints it was not possible to include 100% of the early years and mainstream schools / units cohort within the financial modelling. 63% is however, a robust modelling sample, and that has been used to extrapolate the results to the full EHCP cohort to estimate the total budget impact.
- 4.23 Imosphere provided WNC with benchmarking information from other LAs that use the EBT. This included LAs within and outside London. Adjustments were made to take into consideration the additional London weightings.
- 4.24 Special schools base funding was used in the modelling as that is currently working well and has been established as the process to fund top ups for that sector since 2017
- 4.25 The principle used was the 2024-25 Special School rates plus an additional fixed amount. The additional amount is needed due to the small numbers of SEND pupils in

schools and units as they do not have economies of scale or specialist equipment and buildings.

4.26 7 funding options were modelled.

Option	Option description	Current	RAS	Difference	%Difference
Option 1	Special School Rates	6,221,500	4,909,787	-1,311,713	-21%
Option 2	Special School Rates +1500	6,221,500	6,622,995	401,495	6%
Option 3	Special School Rates +1700	6,221,500	6,851,395	629,895	10%
Option 4	Special School primary Rates +1500	6,221,500	5,634,605	-586,895	-9%
Option 5	Special School primary Rates +1700	6,221,500	5,766,738	-454,762	-7%
Option 6	Special School secondary Rates +1500	6,221,500	8,233,886	2,012,386	32%
Option 7	Special School secondary Rates +1700	6,221,500	8,461,886	2,240,386	36%

4.27 Option 6 is recommended by WNC. This is based on the Special School Secondary rates plus £1,500. This means that the same rate for the equivalent banding level will be applied to CYP in early years, mainstream primary schools & mainstream secondary schools.

4.28 Early Years funding will be allocated on a pro-rata basis which is based on the number of hours that the CYP attends the setting.

4.29 For mainstream schools the top up, for pupils with EHCPs, is in addition to the per pupil formula funding (element 1) and the formula funding notional SEND of £6,000 (element 2) that schools are expected to spend on their pupils from their main school budgets.

4.30 Based on the financial modelling an additional £2.0m is required to support this option in year 1.

4.31 In addition, an additional £0.33m is also needed in year 1 to support payment protection at 75% so that no school loses more than 25% of current funding. Year 2 will be £0.22m and year 3 £0.11m (this may reduce if CYP change education provider).

4.32 Total additional funding for this workstream that will be used to support schools in year 1 is estimated to be £2.34m.

4.33 The financial modelling also highlights that 96 schools will benefit from this option by receiving additional funding, 40 lose funding and will need to be supported by payment protection. Many of those schools will see an overall increase in funding when the different workstreams are combined.

4.34 WNC staff will liaise directly with schools which lose funding when combining the impacts of all the workstreams in the SEND project.

Proposed rates for 2024-25 Mainstream pupils with an EHCP

Band Level	Top Up Funding
1	£0
2	£4,420
3	£4,951
4	£5,429
5	£5,981
6	£9,464
7	£12,542
8	£16,152
9	£20,081
10	£23,904

4.35 WNC Recommended Funding Levels for SEN Units at mainstream schools.

4.36 SEN Units on the grounds of a mainstream school have additional fixed costs that aren't recognised within the mainstream schools funding formula. These unit therefore receive additional funding. This funding varies by unit.

4.37 Financial modelling SEN Unit pupils in mainstream primary and secondary schools. The recommendation is also to implement special school secondary rates +£1,500.

4.38 Based on the financial modelling additional year 1 funding of £173,537 is needed to support these Top Up rates.

Proposed rates for 2024-25 pupils with an EHCP in a SEND unit

Band Level	Top Up funding
1	£0
2	£4,420
3	£4,951
4	£5,429
5	£5,981
6	£9,464
7	£12,542
8	£16,152
9	£20,081
10	£23,904

WNC Recommended Payment Protection

- 4.40 The original WNC proposal was to support existing payment levels with 90% protection for 2 years. This is not affordable within the grant available.
- 4.41 An alternative option is therefore recommended. Payment protection of 75%, 50% and 25% in years 1, 2 and 3 of the new system.
- 4.42 Forum are asked to note that this payment protection would apply to EHC Plan payments, Targeted SEND Funding payments and EHC Plan Special Arrangements at a school budget level.
- 4.43 Protections apply to pupils current funding in schools as at 1st September, if a pupil changes school the protection ends.

EBT Exceptions

- 4.44 SEND Tribunal outcome: if there are funding implications due to the tribunal decisions
- 4.45 Placement at Education Providers which are out of scope of the EBT. This includes:, Independent specialist/school providers and Specialist Post 16 Institutions (SPI)
- 4.46 Communication Support Worker to be employed due to:
- British Sign Language sign support of the curriculum
 - Modification of curriculum into Braille
 - Recent diagnosis with imminent loss of sight

- Serious safeguarding/sexualised behaviour/perpetrator behaviour
- Post-operative additional short-term support
- History of malicious accusations against staff
- High risk of significant/severe absconding (risk assessment in place)
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- Educated Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS)

Other exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Funding Panel

SEND Ranges engagement

4.47 Schools Forum are asked to note that this additional funding is conditional on the SEND Ranges being implemented across early years settings, mainstream schools and units at mainstream schools

Implementation Timing Plan

4.48 Due to the needs to commission a consultation to schools on new funding, and to present the results to Schools Forum in May, plus the volume of EHC Plans which will need a change of funding, the implementation will be delayed from April 2024 to September 2024

- New plans from 1 September
 - Early Years
 - Mainstream Primary schools and Units @ Mainstream Primary schools
 - Mainstream Secondary schools and Units @ Mainstream Secondary schools
- Existing plans from 1 September
 - Mainstream Primary schools and Units @ Mainstream Primary schools
 - Mainstream Secondary schools and Units @ Mainstream Secondary schools

FE Sector EHC Plan Funding

4.49 Completion and moderation of 68 (approximately 20% of the FE EHCP cohort) Needs Profile Forms for FE students was phase #1 of the project. This was completed ahead of the early Years and School age sectors in order to allow analysis and evaluation of the current funding levels for EHCPs and Non-EHCPs within the sector

4.50 After consultation with representatives of the FE sector, in November 2023, WNC agreed with the sector to defer the implementation of new funding process, administration and funding levels until August 2025. This would then allow more time for further evaluation and calculation of appropriate funding levels. This then becomes phase 3 of the project

- 4.51 WNC also discussed the SEND Funding Project implementation “best practice” with other LAs which are currently using the EBT. All were in agreement that implementation should be in distinct phases and extended over a longer period of time to ensure lessons learned from prior phases can be implemented
- 4.52 This agreement means that the current funding allocation system will be maintained for an additional FE funding year ie August 2024 to July 2025
- 4.53 The new processes, administration, and funding levels will be developed / identified and the new system will run alongside the existing allocation system for this extra year

Special Schools EHC Plan / EBT funding

- 4.54 Special Schools have been fully integrated into the EBT since its introduction by NCC in 2017
- 4.55 2024-25 Top Up rates have already been approved and communicated and will be applicable for all new EHC Plans from 1 April 2024-25
- 4.56 The schedule for completion of all V4.I Needs Profile Forms for the balance of special schools still needs to be confirmed. All will be completed and moderated in the same way as the other sectors
- 4.57 At the time of this report there are 873 left to complete. The timeline for their completion has not yet been finalised and is dependent upon EHC Caseworker and Officer resource capacity
- 4.58 Updates on the implementation of changes to EHC Plan Top Up funding for Special Schools will be provided to Forum members at future meetings.

5 Recommendations: Non-EHC Funding: Targeted SEND

- 5.1 This section of the report provides the key headlines on the 2024-25 DSG funding announcements on the funding

Targeted SEND Funding Background

- 5.2 From 2014 to March 2021 funding for CYP without EHC Plans was available via the High Needs Funding Panel Process for CYP in Early Years and School age settings via Northamptonshire County Council
- 5.3 From April 2021 a similar panel process and administration has been implemented by WNC for both age groups.
- 5.4 From April 2021 approximately 60% of recipients of Targeted SEND Funding have been able to achieve their desired outcomes and therefore RSA applications have not needed to be made on their behalf. RSAs have been made on behalf the remaining 40%
- 5.5 Historically this type of funding was referred to as High Needs Funding, however from mid-2023 this has now been changed to Targeted SEND Funding. This name was co-produced with members of the SEND Funding Project Steering Group

- 5.6 For Early Years CYP, the provision of this type of funding by the LA is statutory. LA have to establish SEN inclusion funds (SENIFs) for all children with SEN that are in nursery provision and taking up funded entitlement hours. These funds are intended to support local authorities to work with providers to address the needs of individual children with SEN. The level of funding provided is however at the discretion of the LA.
- 5.7 For school age CYP, SEN funding for pupils without an EHCP is non-statutory and is provided at the discretion of WNC. Schools Forum are asked to note that this type of funding is not available from the majority of East Midland LAs
- 5.8 The objective of this funding is to provide early intervention for CYP with SEND to help them achieve agreed outcomes over a short period of time. By providing this early intervention funding WNC have been able to reduce the number of CYP who go on and apply for a Request For Statutory Assessment (RSA) which is evidence of the effectiveness and importance of this funding to support our children and young people achieve their potential.
- 5.9 WNC believe that there is a direct correlation between the provision of early intervention Targeted SEND Funding and the reduced level of EHC Plans
- 5.10 Forum members are asked to note that applications for targeted SEND funding can only be made by education settings and not by parents / carers / families (Unlike applications for EHC Plans via Requests For Statutory Assessments).

Administration Review for Targeted SEND Funding

- 5.11 The status of the changes to the administration elements of the project are included a separate document within the public paper for Forum on 14 February 2024
- 5.12 This applies to both the Early Years and School age applications

Early Years Targeted SEND Funding

- 5.13 The current application process is via an online Firmstep form completed by the EY setting. Parents and carers cannot apply for this type of funding. Settings apply for the number of hours for which funded is needed
- 5.14 Current funding is paid by a fixed value hourly rate. At the time of this review the hourly rate was £8.00. This rate had been in place for 6 years and was considered as too low due to inflationary increases and the cost of living rises.
- 5.15 4 potential options for the type of funding were presented to the SEND Funding Project Early Years Sub-group in September 2023. Feedback from members highlighted that the preferred funding methodology was to remain with the fixed hourly rate. This was seen as the simplest option from an implementation and on-going management perspective.
- 5.16 In December 2023, WNC reviewed the 2024-25 budget which had been confirmed by the Department of Education, together with estimated costs for the year

- 5.17 Based on the outcome of this review, an increase of 25% to £10.00 per hour was recommended by WNC to EY Providers in the consultation paper which closed on 31 January 2024.
- 5.18 Schools Forum are asked to note that there will be no impact on the DSG early years block as a result of this increase.
- 5.19 Early feedback from EY Sub-group members has indicated that this proposal is acceptable
- 5.20 WNC recommend to Schools Forum that this rate is supported for implementation from 1 April 2024, which will include existing approved applications and new applications

School Age Targeted SEND Funding

- 5.21 The current application process is via an online firststep form completed by the setting. Parents and carers cannot apply for this type of funding. Settings apply for the number of hours and support that is in place for which funded is needed
- 5.22 Current funding levels are from £500 to £6,000 maximum. Funding increases in increments of £500
- 5.23 These rates had also not been increased for 6 years and again they are considered to be too low to cover schools costs of supporting their pupils.
- 5.24 For the school age sector, in September 2023, WNC recommended a needs-based system of targeted SEND funding that would be fair, open and transparent. One that will be administratively simple to operate and therefore reactive and quick to provide information reports.
- 5.25 To do this WNC recommended
- linking the funding rates to the SEND ranges
 - schools to demonstrate that the first £6,000 of Notional SEND expenditure has been paid by the by the school
 - the holistic schools Notional SEND budget has been fully used
- 5.26 SEND Ranges recommended funding
- Ranges 1, 2 & 3 no additional funding is available
 - Range 4a : up to £4,000 is available
 - Range 4b : up to £6,000 is available
 - Range 5 : up to £8,000 is available
 - Ranges 6 & 7 are not applicable to Targeted SEND Funding as these ranges only apply to CYP in special schools. An EHC Plan is a mandatory requirement for attendance at a special school
- 5.27 This recommendation was accepted by the members of the Sub-group

- 5.28 Forum are asked to note that Financial modelling highlighted that as a result of the implementation of these new rates there would be an increase in the budget pressure on the Dedicated Schools Grant of approximately £326,000. This increase would however be mitigated by the prevention of additional CYP needing EHC Plans
- 5.29 WNC recommend to Schools Forum that this rate is endorsed for implementation for all new applications from 1 September 2024. Payments will not change for existing applications within this age group. Implementation from this date coincides with the implementation of new payments for EHCPs in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

2 year limit for Targeted SEND Funding

- 5.30 Targeted SEND Funding by its nature is targeted to support the achievement of specific outcomes over a short period of time. Since September 2023 this time limit has been set at 2 years.
- 5.31 Analysis by WNC highlighted that many education providers were applying for Targeted SEND Funding via Funding Continuation Forms for several years instead of completing a Request For Statutory Assessment for an EHC Plan. Extended support of this type is not the reason why this funding was allocated.
- 5.32 On-going support would be funded through schools Notional SEND budgets.

Targeted SEND Funding Exceptions

- 5.33 Targeted SEND Funding is now limited to 2 years. After this time the funding stops. The desired outcomes have either been achieved or the education provider or parents / carers /young person submits a Request For Statutory Assessment. A third year of Targeted SEND Funding may be approved by the appropriate funding panel due to exceptional circumstances.

Funding can continue during the EHC Needs Assessment Process

- 5.34 Children at schools which have not fully committed their Notional SEND Budget for the appropriate financial year ie the school is applying for Targeted SEND Funding but still has Notional SEND Budget which could cover these costs.

FE Sector Targeted SEND Funding

- 5.35 The agreement to defer the change of FE sector funding until August 2025 also relates to Non-EHC Plan funding.
- 5.36 This was also agreed with representatives of the FE sector.
- 5.37 The implementation delay also allows the identification of lessons learned for Targeted SEND Funding from the Early Years and School age projects.
- 5.38 Updates on the implementation of changes to Non-EHC funding in the FE sector will be provided to Forum members at future meetings.
- 5.39 Special Schools : Non-EHC Plan / Targeted SEND Funding.

5.40 This does not apply to Specials Schools as all CYP attending these schools need to have an EHC.P

6 Holistic Funding Recommendations: Mitigation

6.1 Forum are asked to note that mitigating the risk of making funding recommendations based less than 100% of cases can offset by making future adjustments to the rates. This is much easier once this system is in place.

6.2 Either the rates can be reduced as part of future budget setting or inflationary increase to the high needs budget can be held back and rates not increased, or increased more slowly over the medium term plan.

6.3 An alternative mitigation is that if targets are not being met in regards to moving places away from independent settings that other funding streams are reduced or stopped, for example the non-statutory Targeted SEND Funding for school age children.

7 Consultation with Schools

7.1 The proposed funding changes will impact schools budgets in 2024-25. WNC will commission a consultation with mainstream schools in March and to communicate those changes and to receive feedback on any concerns and issues that schools may have about their SEND funding.

7.2 The results of this consultation will be brought to Schools Forum on 14 May

8 Communication and Training

8.1 A comprehensive programme is being developed and will be implemented in Q2.

8.2 This includes a face to face event at the Guildhall on 12 March for parents / carers and education providers, online events and communication via standard communication channels.

8.3 These include the WNC Local Offer, Early Years Connections, Early Years Portal, and Head West.

9 Recommendations for Schools Forum

9.1 That Schools Forum supports the proposed changes to West Northamptonshire Council's SEND funding processes for top up (element 3) as set out in the report.

Report Author:

Officer name: Andy Pymm

Officer title: SEND Project Manager

Email address: andy.pymm@westnorthants.gov.uk