



SCHOOLS' FORUM MEETING

18 January 2018

SEND Early Support Fund

1. Purpose

To consult with members of School Forum on the introduction of an Early Support Fund within the DSG High Needs funding block to support children with Special Educational Need and or Disabilities (SEND).

2. Background

A child or young person has special educational needs where a learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision which is different or above that normally provided to children of the same age.

As per the SEND Code of Practice 2015 schools provide additional provision to meet the needs of children with SEND and are responsible for funding any additional support up to the nationally prescribed threshold of the first £6,000 (Element 2 funding).

Where the cost of special education provision is above this level the Local Authority provides top up funding through the DSG High Needs funding block (Element 3). Access to this top up funding has historically been secured through requests for Education Health and Care Plans by schools.

Budget Pressure

Due to increasing demand for specialist provision the High Needs funding block was overspent in the 2016/17 financial year and, as of January 2018, the block is projected to be £130,000 overspent in this financial year. The main contributor to the funding pressures are for special school provision and out of county school placements.

Analysis

Analysis of the use of High Needs funding and School Census data has highlighted that;

- The levels of EHCPs are lower in primary education than secondary and there is a significant increase in the volume of children receiving an EHCP after transition in year 7 and 8.

- There is a high proportion of children educated out of County in high cost placements at Secondary school age and this has risen significantly since 2013/14.
- Funding per pupil is higher at secondary school age than at primary school age.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) account for the highest volume of need amongst children and young people, and placements for young people identified with SEMH are among the most expensive.

The data suggests that children and young people with SEND are not necessarily accessing the right level of support as needs emerge which may be contributing to their needs escalating as they transition from primary to secondary school stage.

The differences between school environments in the different Phases may enable the needs of children with SEND to be better managed within existing resources at primary stage but consequently may not prepare children for effective transition when their needs become exposed to a different learning environment.

Accessing funding to support children through Education Health and Care assessment is a lengthy process, requiring 20 week assessment period which could, due to resources, prevent schools from applying for EHC assessments until the needs of children have escalated.

The potential delay in timely intervention may be contributing to an escalation in difficulties and an increase in children and young people's needs not being met in mainstream education locally, contributing to the rise in costly out of County placements.

3. Project Proposal – Early Support Fund (ESF)

It is proposed that a portion of funding, £100,000 in 2018/19, is ring fenced from the High Needs block and made available to primary schools without application for EHC assessments.

It is proposed that the fund would be available, in the main, for primary provisions to support effective transitions.

Funding for children in early years is currently in place through a small Inclusion Fund within the High Needs funding block available to support children with lower or emerging SEND aged 3-4 accessing free entitlement. This fund is a statutory requirement as outlined within the EFA early years funding formula and levels should be set in consultation with early year's settings. At present the level of funding available in the fund is relatively small, representing just 1.3% of the overall budget. Therefore it is proposed early years settings can access the ESF if the existing Inclusion Fund is spent.

Purpose

The purpose of the fund is to;

1. Provide an earlier opportunity for schools to access funding to help reduce the barriers to learning for children who have SEND but do not necessarily require, at that stage, an EHC assessment or plan.
2. Facilitate timely and effective early identification and support for children in mainstream education settings.
3. Secure short term (one academic year) additional support above Element 2 thresholds to prevent the escalation of a child/young person's needs and to maintain or enhance their educational progress.
4. Facilitate innovative approaches to inclusion and provide alternative options to lengthy statutory assessment.

Outcomes

1. The needs of children are met at an earlier stage which has a positive impact on their long term learning outcomes, enabling children to remain and thrive in mainstream education.
2. Children and young people experience timely and effective transitions between the stages of their learning, particular in the early years to reception and primary to secondary transition phases.
3. There is a reduction in the number of children and young people going through unnecessary statutory EHC assessment.
4. A reduction in mediation, tribunals and associated costs as needs are met earlier.

Eligibility Criteria and Funding Use

Appendix A sets out the proposed eligibility criteria for the fund. It is proposed that the fund is available to education settings in Rutland (maintained, non-maintained & Academies) to provide additional support for children/young people who have/may have SEND who are resident in Rutland and of primary school age.

Implementation

If approved it is proposed that the ESF will go live in April 2018 for a one year trial. The impact of the programme will be measured during this period for consideration ahead of year two and will include a review of uptake, costs and quantitative and qualitative impact measures at a case level.

4. Considerations

The fund aims to prevent the escalation of needs and thereby reduce the volume of children who can no longer be educated in mainstream education within County. The ESF proposal is part of a range of work streams within the SEND aimed at improving early support and life chances for children and young people with SEND in Rutland.

If the fund works as proposed the County should see a reduction in high cost placements, which may reduce the pressure on the DSG High Needs funding block.

The funding will be taken from a budget already predicted to overspend. If the pressures continue at present levels this fund will add additional costs.

The benefits of the fund are not likely to be realised in the immediate term and will require longer term investment.

5. Recommendations

1. Members note the proposal for the fund and provide feedback on content, including the eligibility criteria set out in appendix A.
2. Members approve the principle of the fund with a view to trialling the fund for one year.

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Appendix A – Early Support Fund Eligibility Criteria and Funding Use

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Available to education settings in Rutland (maintained, non-maintained & Academies) to provide additional support for children/young people who have SEND who are resident in Rutland and of primary school age.
2. Available to support a child/young person who is already receiving SEN support and associated Element 2 funding up to 15 hours.
3. Supporting evidence from the education setting highlights the SEN support (use of 15 hours) and progress which has been made and that additional resource will enhance this progress or prevent further negative impacts on learning.
4. The needs of the child/young person have been assessed (EHA, SEN Support, EP) and as such are clearly known and have been responded to by the education setting.
5. It has been identified that with additional resource the child could be maintained in their education setting and would help to prepare for their transition in education.
6. There is a clear plan in place for the child/young person that will support their transition in education and aid their educational outcomes.
7. Schools must include the views of children/young people and parents/carers when making an application to ensure all views are represented.
8. The fund is not applicable for children who have previously received ESF funding where little or no progress was achieved.

Use of funding

The level of funding available will be determined by the individual needs of the child and therefore no funding threshold will be applied. However schools will be expected to clearly articulate the additional support and associated costs which should be at a level as to not warrant an EHC assessment.

The fund is available for short term interventions and is not designed to replace on-going support which would likely necessitate an EHC assessment. Allocations will be for one year from the date of approval. Funding is available in following years if appropriate to meet needs which can be increased or decreased depending on the levels of progress made.

Funding can only be used to provide additional educational support to children and young people in a mainstream setting. This could include access to additional teacher or TA support, therapeutic intervention, behaviour support or associated programmes etc.

The funding cannot be used for the purchase of equipment or similar adaptations which would be expected as part of reasonable adjustments required by an education setting under the equality act.

The fund is allocated to pupils and schools must notify the Local Authority if a pupil leaves. The funding cannot be transferred to other pupils and pro rata reimbursements to the Local Authority will be required.