

SCHOOLS FORUM

Meeting date: 13th March 2020

**From: Daniel Barton
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SEN INCLUSION FUND 2020-21

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 *This paper updates the schools forum members on the impact of the pilot that took place during the autumn term and the subsequent consultation with early years providers, parents and SEN specialists in on the proposed new criteria for accessing the SEN Inclusion Fund which is aimed at widening the accessibility and increasing the number of SEN children supported by the fund in 2020-21. After considering the outcome of the pilot and views of providers and professionals it is proposed to increase the funding bands to £1,500 for each pupil being assessed for an EHCP and up to £500 short term early intervention funding for children identified as Band 3 or below following local authority SENCO recommendation.*

1.2 *The changes will come into effect from 1st April 2020.*

2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

2.1 *The utilisation of the early years block within the Dedicated Schools Grant is supportive of the Council Plan outcome that ‘People in Cumbria are healthy and safe’.*

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 *The Schools Forum is recommended to note the contents of this paper and proposed change in SEN Inclusion Fund eligibility criteria and increases in some funding bands from 2020-21.*

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 *Local authorities are required to have an SEN Inclusion Fund for three and four year olds with SEN who are taking up the free entitlements and the Early Years National Funding Formula guidance states that the majority of the SEN Inclusion fund should pass to providers in the form of grants on a*

case-by-case basis. Local Authorities can also use part of the SEN Inclusion Fund to support specialist SEN services in their local area. The SEN Inclusion Fund can be funded by the Early Years and/or the High Needs Block and can also include support for two year olds with SEN. The SEN Inclusion Fund was first introduced in 2017-18 and since its introduction has been set at £0.260m each year and has been fully funded from the Early Years Block. It has historically been underspent and in 2019-20 the budget is currently predicted to underspend by £0.106m.

4.2 The current criteria for allocating SEN Inclusion Funding for two, three and four year olds accessing free entitlement is as follows:

- £1,000 one-off payment for each pupil being assessed for an EHCP;
- £600 one-off payment for each pupil not being issued with an EHCP after assessment;
- £600 one-off payment for each pupil entitled to Disability Living Allowance if not issued with an EHCP.

4.3 In addition to the above current criteria and to widen the scope of eligibility and increase the number of children supported by the fund the following criteria was proposed:

- Up to £500 short term funding for children identified as Band 4 and 5 using Early Years criteria following LA SENCO recommendation prior to preparation for a request for an EHCP assessment;
- Up to £300 short term early intervention funding for children identified as Band 3 or below following LA SENCO recommendation.

4.4 In Autumn term 2019 the new additional criteria were piloted to enable the local authority to assess impact on children and to assess demand to ensure budgetary requirements can be adhered to.

4.5 During Autumn 2019 term 73 grants were allocated through the SEN Inclusion Fund, totalling £0.058m as follows:

Existing Criteria

- 46 children were allocated funding for the period of EHCP assessment at £0.046m;
- 4 children who were not put forward for EHCP assessment, but had some need of additional short term funding at £0.002m.

New Additional Criteria

- 16 children were allocated funding for exceptional circumstances where funding was required immediately to enable children to access provision at £0.008m;
- 7 children were allocated lower level funding to support provider to put in place appropriate interventions at £0.002m.

- 4.6 The financial impact analysis of this change in criteria resulted in an additional 23 SEN Inclusion Fund allocations totalling £0.010m.
- 4.7 In Spring 2020, early years providers, parents and other professionals who have implemented and accessed the new criteria in Autumn 2019 were surveyed.
- 4.8 Consultation responses were received from 22 of the 54 providers surveyed, representing 41% of participants. 14 responses were received from parents. Professional responses were received from Early Years Area SENCO's and Specialist Advisory Teachers.
- 86% of respondents agreed the criteria were appropriate, comments include: "The grants for early support for band 3 and below in particular when an EH is open and being supported by the Area SENCO is really helpful", "It is a fair banding criteria", "The additional criteria will help support providers in the short term as the first few months when a child starts in the setting is usually the most stressful for the child as they are making the transition.", 'SEN inclusion funding it can be used for a child in the interim period when an EHCP is being applied for'.
 - 4% of respondents did not agree the criteria, comments included: "Early Support Prior to EHCP assessment is very much needed but unfortunately the amounts are nowhere near enough to cover even half of the amount school will have to pay a TA for support", "I do welcome the inclusion of a grant for children at Band 3 or below and think it essential for children with low level or emerging needs. However, I do not think this should be a one off payment. I also think the amount of £300 is far too low.", "ALL children should be entitled to it - not just the funded ones" and "The minimal payments we have received go nowhere near to meeting the costs for a Maintained Nursery school paying County Council rates of pay for support of a child, even when this is shared and used a frugally as possible."
 - Providers reported the funding has been used to provide additional staff resource to support the child in the provision, many indicating 1:1 support has been provided.
 - Parents comments include: "Mum is glad for any extra help for her child because it makes a difference.", "This funding has helped massively with our child's development", 'can't believe how well he has settled and the progress he is making', 'this funding helped support language development and interaction through funding additional support. He now has an EHCP.' and "As long as my child is happy and being the best they can be then I'm happy."
- 4.9 Following the consultation results it is proposed that from 1st April 2020 the criteria and some grants are increased for allocating SEN Inclusion Fund for two, three and four year olds accessing free entitlement is as follows:
- £1,500 (previously £1,000) one-off payment for each pupil being assessed for an EHCP;
 - £600 one-off payment for each pupil not being issued with an EHCP after assessment;

- £600 one-off payment for each pupil entitled to Disability Living Allowance if not issued with an EHCP;
- Up to £500 short term funding for children where exception circumstances are identified who are Band 4 and 5 using Early Years criteria prior to preparation for a request for an EHCP assessment;
- Up to £500 (previously £300) short term early intervention funding for children identified as Band 3 or below following local authority SENCO recommendation.

4.10 Based on allocations of the SEN Inclusion Fund during 2019-20, the proposed increases in funding forecasts an additional £0.074m would be distributed.

5.0 OPTIONS

5.1 The Schools Forum is recommended to note the contents of this paper, the change in the allocation methodology to widen the eligibility criteria and increases in some of the funding bands from 1st April 2020.

6.0 RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Resource and value for money implications are considered throughout this paper. The widening the eligibility criteria and increasing some funding grants for low and emerging SEN through the Early Years Block will increase support for children with SEN identified at an early stage and could lead to a longer-term reduction in the complexity of support needed at a later stage of a child's education.

6.2 The widening of the SEN Inclusion Fund criteria and increases in some of the allocations will be funded from the Early Years Block SEN Inclusion Fund budget which has been historically underspent.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Schools Forum is asked to note this report which sets out the proposed widening of the SEN Inclusion Fund criteria and increase of some of the grants from 1st April 2020 to increase support for children with SEN at an early stage.

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