

SCHOOLS FORUM

Meeting date: 9 June 2021

**From: Daniel Barton
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SEN INCLUSION FUND 2021/22

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 *This paper updates the Schools forum members on the impact of the introduction of new criteria to administer the SEN inclusion fund in April 2020.*
- 1.2 *After considering the applications to the fund during 2020/21 it is proposed to increase the funding band for short term early intervention funding for children identified as Band 3 or below from £500 to £800 and to introduce an additional grant criteria to support one off purchases of physical or medical equipment.*
- 1.3 *It is proposed that the changes will come into effect from 1 September 2021.*

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 the proposed changes to the SEN Inclusion Fund allocation methodology from 1 September 2021.*

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 2020/21 the underspend was (£0.077m). However, due the pandemic, with the number of SEN children in provision, applications to this fund during 2020/21 were reduced.

4.2 To widen the scope of eligibility and increase the number of children supported by the fund new criteria was introduced from 1 April 2020. Following the evaluation of grants made in 2020/21, 24 grants of £500 were allocated for short term intervention funding for children identified as Band 3 or below. of which 14 (58%) would have benefited from additional support over a longer period of time and/or a higher frequency of bespoke individual support. Also, a small number of early years providers are seeking funding to support with physical and medical equipment required to meet children's needs whilst in their provision where Disability Access Funding (DAF) is insufficient, families are not eligible or DAF has already been utilised.

4.3 It is proposed that from 1 September 2021 the criteria for allocating SEN Inclusion Fund for two, three and four year olds accessing free entitlement is expanded to include the following:

Existing

- £1,500 one-off payment for each pupil being assessed for an EHCP
- Discretionary £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 exceptional circumstances are identified who are Band 4 and 5 using Early Years criteria prior to preparation for a request for an EHCP assessment

Proposed changes/additions

- Up to £800 (previously £500) short term early intervention funding for children identified as Band 3 or below following local authority SENCO recommendation
- Up to £1,000 for physical or medical equipment to enable and support a child to access Early Education in the provision

4.4 The full year impact for the proposed banding increase from £500 up to a maximum of £800 is estimated to be £0.007m based on grant allocations made in 2020/21 and potential grant allocations for physical/medical equipment are estimated at £0.005m therefore in total is it estimated that an additional £0.012m would be distributed.

5.0 OPTIONS

- 5.1 The Schools Forum is asked to note the contents of this paper and consider the proposed changes to the SEN Inclusion Fund.

6.0 RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Resource and value for money implications are considered throughout this paper. The proposed changes to the SEN Inclusion Fund allocation methodology 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 SEN Inclusion fund budget for 2021/22 is £260,000 and the proposed changes are forecast to be met within the existing budget.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Schools Forum is asked to note this report which sets out the proposed changes to the SEN Inclusion Fund effective from 1 September 2021.

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