**High Needs Funding Review**

**Conclusions and Proposals**

**Background**

Kent’s current investment in supporting our most vulnerable children with Special Educational Needs in mainstream schools extends to an above national average targeted funding of £116.7m. This includes £7.7m for the district LIFT resource of specialist teachers and special school outreach teachers, £27m on high needs funding and £82m in SEN notional budget. As well as this Kent spend £72m on special schools and £31m on out of county placements. This means Kent spends £219m on SEN which equates to an above national average 20% of the total education budget.

**Context**

Since implementing Kent’s high needs funding approach, the number of pupils receiving additional funding for provision to meet their SEN needs that is above the school’s normally available resource, has risen from 900 under the previous system to over 2,500. Unfortunately continuing with the current arrangements and a forecast trajectory in excess of 3,000 pupils is financially unsustainable.

KCC and Kent schools continue to be committed to using their best endeavours to meet the needs of the children with the most severe and complex needs with and without an EHCP. However, to ensure we can continue to effectively meet these needs within the context of the budget pressures of the current process, as well as in preparation for the implementation of a new national formula distribution of the high needs block and a centrally determined formula for school funding by 2019-20, a review of high needs funding was undertaken.

**Conclusions**

The proposals have been informed by the conclusions drawn from the high needs funding review below.

Statutory Assessment and HNF

The number of Statutory Assessment (SA) requests from schools has decreased in line with an increase in applications for high needs funding. This suggests that HNF is having a positive effect on the main driver identified by schools; lack of pupil progress.

However, the number of Statutory Assessment requests from parents has increased over the same period. Schools identified that the drivers of parental concerns were regarding transition to secondary school, access to some therapy services and wanting a specialist school placement.

Schools felt that parents need to be confident that their child’s special educational needs will be met by any mainstream school without the need for Statutory Assessment or a specialist placement and that they fully understand what benefits an EHCP can and can’t bring to their child’s provision.

The majority of children being issued an EHCP in primary schools remain in mainstream schools. Therefore, Kent needs to ensure mainstream schools have access to appropriate whole school training and specialist advice/ support to enable them to use their ‘best endeavours’ to provide the most appropriate provision and meet the SEN Outcomes of these children and any others with severe and complex needs.

The Distribution of HNF

Kent is committed to ensuring that high needs funding is appropriately allocated to support the delivery of the more expensive provision for the children with the highest level of need. Schools also stated that they want the system to be as fair and equitable as possible and to hold all schools accountable for the use of this element of public funds.

High needs funding needs to be specific to the provision required to meet the needs of individual children. The staffing of this provision should be with regard to the Educational Endowment Foundation guidance on the use of Teaching Assistants.

The Use of HNF

Schools identified variations in how they utilise their normally available resource before requesting top up funding. Therefore, Kent needs to be clearer as to what is meant by normally available resource and quality first teaching (QFT) and how this underpins the criteria for HNF.

Schools cited planning using the ‘assess, plan, do and review’ cycle in partnership with parents and pupil, as paramount to effective provision. The class teacher provision mapping to plan SEN provision and monitoring the pupil’s progress was also identified as an essential element to good practice.

Application Process

The application form has evolved over the last two years in response to feedback from schools but schools felt that it still can be time consuming to complete and requires the duplication of information on personalised/ provision plans. Schools also wanted to be able to fully utilise the pre-existing

evidence which they have built up as part of the ‘assess, plan, do review’ cycle. Schools felt that the monitoring by the SEN Area Provision Evaluation Officers was useful to ensure funds were being used appropriately and many identified that this also supported the development of SEN practice in their schools. Unannounced visits were suggested by a number of schools.

**Recommendations**

1. **Eligibility**

**Criteria for High Needs Funding Applications (appendix A & B)**

* The pupil will have an EHCP or be SEN Support with severe and complex needs.
* The pupil will be on the school roll and in full time attendance (except in exceptional cases).
* If the pupil doesn’t have an EHCP the school will have identified the pupil’s SEN needs with the support of external professionals.
* The school will have fully utilised their normally available resources to address the needs of the pupil. (appendix C)
* The pupil’s provision to meet their SEN Outcomes will be in line with the Personalised/ Individualised Learning descriptors in the KCC Mainstream Core Standards. (updated C&I, C&L and SEMH attached to appendix C)
* If the pupil doesn’t have an EHCP the school will have sought advice and further guidance from the district offer of support through LIFT as part of the ‘assess, plan, do & review’ cycle.
* Recommendations from professionals will have been implemented and evaluated to evidence an increasingly personalised provision.
* Training relevant to the need type of the pupil will have been undertaken by the school and suitably implemented within the last two years.

**Evidence**

To ensure the child meets the criteria above, schools will be expected to provide the following pre-existing evidence for all applications (**new and renewals**);

* Previous two reviewed personalised /provision plans (SEN CoP recommends a minimum of 3 per year) that show the implementation of recommendations from professionals and the ‘assess, plan, do and review’ cycle. (For new pupils to the school; a copy of the transition
* plan and the last reviewed provision plan from the previous educational provider).
* School provision map. (Only required once per academic year if more than one application/ reapplication is made).
* Present provision plan. (for new applications schools may wish to add the costings to the provision plan or use the example attached to check that the provision exceeds the £6,000 threshold. appendix D)
* Risk assessment (if appropriate).

For **new** applications where the **child doesn’t have an EHCP**, schools will also be expected to provide the following evidence;

* Reports that identify the SEN needs of the pupil.
* Evidence of the use of the district offer eg. LIFT outcome sheet.
* Signed parental consent form.

**If the child has an EHCP this information would not be required.**

For reapplications where the school feels there have been significant changes to the needs of the child since the last HNF application, they may wish to provide additional evidence as this may affect the funding level provided.

1. **Affordability**

Schools should try to only submit personalised/ provision plans that exceed the £6,000 threshold and that includes staffing which reflects the Best Use of TAs document. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Campaigns/TA_Guidance_Report_MakingBestUseOfTeachingAssisstants-Printable.pdf>

If the school chooses to submit a costed personalised/ provision plan, the local authority will not be able to guarantee that all the costed elements will be funded if parts of the provision are considered quality first teaching or the staffing levels aren’t appropriate for the CYP’s SEN needs.

The school’s total number of high needs funded pupils by need type will also be taken into account when considering an application. There will be an expectation that schools utilise group work for CYP with similar needs.

Hourly rates to be used when costing a plan are in keeping with the HNF application (rounded):

TA = £15

HLTA = £18

Teacher = £43

SEN teacher = £48

Costs should be calculated for 38 weeks per year.

For example, Sensory circuits delivered for 15 minutes, three times per week by a TA at £15 per hour to a group of 3 pupils would be;

15 minutes x 3 times per week= 45 minutes

Weekly cost of the TA for 45 minutes =£11.25

£11.25 divided by 3 pupils = £3.75 per pupil

£3.75 x 38 weeks = £142.50 per annum

The New Approach

From April 2018, after the actual costs are agreed, a need specific graduated funding response will be applied. Further details will be provided once costs are finalised by the Schools Funding Forum.

The notional top up for smaller schools will continue.

Exceptions

Higher levels of funding outside of the banding may be agreed in exceptional circumstances. For example:

* A child with an EHCP in the process of moving to a special school placement.
* Tribunal decision for exceptional provision in a mainstream placement.
* Extremely unstable or complex medical condition that requires a high level of adult support to administer elements of a care plan.

1. **Process**

* There will be a revised online application form that will remove the need to duplicate the timetable of provision that schools evidence on a personalised/ provision plan.
* Other than the link to ‘timetable’ being removed, the application form will be the same up until after the section on information on the pupil’s special educational needs.
* The sections on ‘interventions’, ‘resources’ and ‘services’ will be removed.
* For new applications when the child doesn’t have an EHCP, schools will be asked to provide more evidence to ensure the ‘assess, plan, do and review’ cycle has been appropriately followed and that the needs of the CYP have been identified.
* New applications for children with EHCPs won’t require this evidence as the EHCP identifies the child’s needs and that these needs are severe and complex.
* Schools should upload the evidence specified in the criteria section and on the attached checklist (appendix B).
* If an application has to be deferred due to the need for additional information from a school, there will be an expectation that this is provided within two weeks. (School holidays will also be taken into account). If the information isn’t provided in this time the application will only be backdated to the date the information is finally provided rather than the initial submission date.
* Schools and parents will be informed by email that top up funding will be provided and the length of the agreement. Maximum length will be for a whole key stage before reapplication is required. Review of the provision should continue during this time in line with the SEN Code of Practice (three times per year). SEN Provision Evaluation Officers (PEO) will monitor and support schools to utilise funding appropriately.
* As part of the agreement there may also be recommendations for accessing other sources of support. For example, staff training or resources. These will be checked in monitoring visits.
* HNF monitoring visits will continue to be in response to concerns raised but there will also be a number of random HNF monitoring visits undertaken by the SEN PEO.

**Timescale**

December 2017

Schools will be informed of the amount of funding they will receive from 1st April 2018 for any pupils that are presently in receipt of high needs funding.

20th December 2017

* To allow for changes, the High Needs Funding application form will go offline on this date until 8th January 2018.
* Any applications submitted before this date will be processed using the present application form.
* If an application is deferred and additional information or amendments aren’t completed by 20th December, the application will be updated in line with the new process.
* If a school has partially completed an application but not submitted it by this date, some information entered may be deleted.

8th January 2018

* Shorter application form will be available.
* Schools will need to upload more pre-existing evidence as specified in the criteria.
* High needs funding will be calculated by the HNF Officer.
* School and parents will be informed via email that funding has been agreed and the length of the agreement.
* Schools will be given details of the funding amount from the date of submission until 31st March 2018 and on the amount of funding in line with a need specific graduated funding response from 1st April 2018.

1st April 2018

* Need specific graduated funding will start. (further details to follow)