**High Needs Funding Review**

**Proposed Changes from April 2018**

KCC and Kent schools are committed to using their best endeavours to meet the needs of the children with the most severe and complex special educational needs with and without an EHCP. To ensure we can continue to effectively meet these needs within the context of the High Needs budget and in light of the findings of the High Needs Funding Review, KCC will be making the following proposed changes. These have been discussed at the Schools Funding Forum and were endorsed at the October 2017 meeting.

**Statutory Assessment and High Needs Funding**

KCC made a policy decision in 2015, following the changes introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014, to introduce a new top up funding model for High Needs learners that did not require an Education Health and Care Plan in order to access the additional funding. Since then the number of Statutory Assessment (SA) requests from schools has decreased in line with an increase in applications for High Needs funding. The intention was always to target this funding to the pupils who need it most and consequently HNF is having a positive effect on the main driver identified by schools, which is lack of progress for pupils with significant levels of special educational need.

Going forward Kent will continue to:

* provide funding for all children with severe and complex SEN, with or without an EHCP
* and will introduce a longer funding period to the end of a key stage for pupils with the most severe and complex needs, where it is evident that a child’s needs are long term and significant.

**The Distribution of High Needs Funding**

KCC is committed to ensuring that High Needs funding is appropriately allocated to support the delivery of the additional provision for the children with the highest level of need. We aim to be clearer in our criteria for High Needs funding and two key requirements must be met:

* a child has severe and complex needs and a level of additional provision is needed, on top of the school’s core provision, to enable them to make progress in learning
* and the child would otherwise need the additional provision that could be made though an Education, Health and Care Plan.

High needs funding needs to be specific to the provision required to meet the needs of individual children. A comprehensive provision map is therefore essential, related to the specific need type, eg ASD, speech and language needs, or social, emotional and mental health needs. These require specific interventions and forms of support, and going forward High Needs Funding will be allocated by need type, and graduated by the level of severity of need.

Support through a Teaching Assistant on a one to one basis for significant parts of the teaching time does not on its own constitute a need specific intervention. Through High Needs funding we aim to support evidenced based interventions that are used primarily in the classroom, with support, and in small teaching groups to ensure pupils make progress.

Where the High Needs funding is used to support additional staffing, including Teaching Assistants, the provision is expected to reflect best practice, such as the Educational Endowment Foundation guidance on the use of Teaching Assistants. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Campaigns/TA_Guidance_Report_MakingBestUseOfTeachingAssisstants-Printable.pdf> .

Going forward:

* KCC will provide clear criteria for High Needs funding and guidance on the use of staffing
* schools will be able to utilise pre-existing evidence to show the level of learning need and need type
* from April 2018, after the actual costs are agreed, a need specific graduated funding allocation will be made
* the notional top up for small schools will continue
* higher levels of funding outside of the need specific graduated allocation may be agreed in exceptional circumstances where pupils in mainstream schools have very pronounced severe and complex needs, and the funding will be allocated for the whole of a key stage.
* KCC will incorporate guidance as to what is meant by ‘normally available resource’ for SEN and quality first teaching (QFT) within the Mainstream Core Standards document.

**High Needs Funding Application Process**

The High Needs funding application process has evolved over the last two years in response to feedback from schools. This will be further streamlined and made simpler. We

recognise that it is more efficient to be able to fully utilise the pre-existing evidence which schools already have as part of the ‘assess, plan, do review’ cycle.

* There will be a revised online application form that will remove the need to duplicate the timetable of provision that schools evidence on a provision plan.
* Any queries back to the school for more information that require an application to be deferred will be resolved within two weeks. (School holidays will also be taken into account). Otherwise, the application will only be backdated to the date the query is resolved 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. A timetable will no longer be sent out.
* SEN Provision Evaluation Officers (PEO) will continue to monitor and support schools to utilise funding appropriately.
* As part of the High Needs funding agreement, there may also be recommendations for accessing other sources of support, for example, staff training or resources through the LIFT process.

**Timescales**

November 2017

* Headteacher Briefings on High Needs funding review and proposals.
* SENCos informed of the proposed changes via email, SENCo forums and AEN Update meetings.

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.
* To allow for changes, the High Needs Funding application form will go offline from 20 December until 5th January 2018.

From 8th January 2018

* The shorter application form will be available.
* 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 allocation from 1st April 2018.

From 1st April 2018

* The new model of need specific graduated funding allocations will start.

The High Needs funding review aimed to ensure the High Needs top up budget in future is more predictable and more closely linked to patterns and levels of need. These proposals are intended to ensure we have a sustainable and transparent model going forward, so that the High Needs budget can continue to fund the top up required by schools to support the pupils with the most severe and complex needs that may otherwise warrant statutory assessment.

These proposals also aim to ensure the High Needs budget is clearly merited when there is evidence that the school has used its best endeavours and total available resource to provide the pupil’s special educational needs.

High Needs funding is also expected to be used well in tandem with other resources such as LIFT to get the best outcomes for pupils.

The best practice should ensure that a pupil’s need for High Needs resources should reduce over time as the learner makes better progress.