

Response ID ANON-XYDA-G13T-N

Submitted to **High needs funding reform**

Submitted on **2016-04-15 17:14:10**

Introduction

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C Response type

Please select your role from the list below::

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Organisation name::

North Tyneside Schools Forum

Local authority area::

North Tyneside

D Would you like your response to be confidential?

No

Please give your reason for confidentiality::

Principles for a reformed funding system

1 Do you agree with our proposed principles for the funding system?

Yes

Please provide any further comments::

North Tyneside Schools Forum (the Forum) regards the seven principles as all being worthy and finds it hard to disagree with the general intentions set out in the consultation document. However, the challenge will be whether these principles can all be delivered concurrently and fully, e.g. developing a simple formula for high needs that is also fair on a national level. To come to an informed decision about the principles set out the Forum needs more information to understand the impact of the proposed approach and how DfE proposes to manage the period of transition.

Changes to high needs funding cannot be considered in isolation. For example, schools may face reductions in per pupil funding arising from the national funding formula at a time when their cost base will often be unchanged or increasing (e.g. due to changes in National Insurance etc). Changes to the funding formula could therefore also have a destabilising effect on high needs provision.

It is difficult to see how some of the proposals in this consultation square with those in the White Paper, Educational Excellence Everywhere. The proposed decision making powers of Multi-Academy Trusts and Regional Schools Commissioners run contrary to the idea of local devolution and accountability. There is also very little information in the high needs consultation document about the future of Schools Forums or their future role in local governance arrangements.

The Forum is concerned that creating a ring-fenced schools block with no ability to move money between blocks will restrict local responsiveness. Forum has significant concerns that, due to the rigidity of the system, there could be insufficient resources in the high needs block to meet needs and allow the local authority to meet its statutory responsibilities. In recent years Schools Forum has played an integral role in decision making about block-to-block transfers to ensure funding is allocated to meet local needs. The Forum is concerned that there is a risk that highly inclusive schools and those with specialist provision could suffer.

Distributing high needs funding to local authorities

2 Do you agree that the majority of high needs funding should be distributed to local authorities rather than directly to schools and other institutions?

Yes

Please provide any further comments::

The Forum agrees that the majority of funding should be routed through local authorities rather than direct to schools and other providers. The Forum is concerned that there is a risk that the separation of the high needs block from formula funding will create a 'silo approach' and conflict with the concept of inclusion. Inclusion is an important local priority and the Forum has worked hard to promote a culture of inclusion in all schools. Inclusive policy and practice can avoid the need for young people to move between schools. Such moves are often accompanied by escalating costs.

The problems experienced by young people with SEND or those who have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives and need to be looked after by the local authority can quickly increase in complexity. All young people who have SEND, whether they have an Education Health and Care Plan or not, should be able to learn in a mainstream setting unless they require specialist provision. Forum wants inclusive schools capable of responding to such needs and is concerned that the changes to high needs funding will make this more difficult.

The Forum appreciates that the local authority has a key role in producing the local offer, leading the process of joint commissioning and helping to integrate planning for education, health and care and encouraging uptake of personal budgets. The role of Health is crucial. The Forum welcomes the intention to produce further guidance for Health and feels that the DfE should do more to encourage Health to engage effectively in the high needs process.

3 Do you agree that the high needs formula should be based on proxy measures of need, not the assessed needs of children and young people?

No

Please provide any further comments::

The Forum does not agree with the proposal to allocate funding using proxy measures rather than real levels of assessed need. The Forum believes that funding should be allocated in line with need. Use of proxy measures do not guarantee that the amount of funding will match the level of assessed need.

Formula design

4 Do you agree with the basic factors proposed for the formula?

Yes/No - Basic entitlement:

Agree

Yes/No - Population:

Disagree

Yes/No - Child health:

Agree

Yes/No - Child disability:

Agree

Yes/No - Low attainment at key stage 2:

Agree

Yes/No - Low attainment at key stage 4:

Agree

Yes/No - Deprivation - free school meal eligibility:

Agree

Yes/No - Deprivation - income deprivation affecting children index:

Disagree

Yes/No - Adjustments - for "imports/exports":

Agree

Please provide any further comments::

An area with a high population but low levels of need would get a disproportionate amount of funding compared to an area with low population and high levels of need.

Child Health, Child Disability and Deprivation measures are all more appropriate, as would be adding an assessment of SEN data from the school census.

Child Health data is based on a subjective question from the census. The Forum therefore feels that data on child health needs to be included but be given a low weighting. Data on Child Disability based on DLA is appropriate, although it only picks up higher levels of disability.

Low attainment at both Key Stages can have many causes and only some are influenced by high needs spending. Attainment measures should therefore be given a lower weighting. Forum has some concerns about the use of IDACI as the data can be up to 5 years out of date and pupils may not match the characteristics of their postcode area.

Free School Meals is always current and widely accepted so this would be the more appropriate factor to use and would make the calculation simpler and more transparent. Forum agrees that an adjustment for import/exports is appropriate.

DfE should make the implications for funding explicit at stage 2 of the consultation so that the local effect of the weighting attached to each measure can be assessed.

5 We are not proposing to make changes to the distribution of funding for hospital education, but would welcome views as we continue working with representatives of this sector on the way forward.

Please provide your comments::

Funding for hospital education is top-sliced from the DSG and the Forum has no detailed comments at this stage. The Forum wishes to highlight the importance of joint working with Health on hospital education. Forum would also like more information from DfE about the current arrangements for funding and monitoring the quality of hospital education and how providers of hospital education are held to account.

6 Which methodology for the area cost adjustment do you support?

hybrid methodology

Please provide any further comments::

The view of the Forum is that the hybrid methodology appears to offer a closer match with the featured costs than the GLM method.

Managing a smooth transition

7 Do you agree that we should include a proportion of 2016-17 spending in the formula allocations of funding for high needs?

Yes

Please provide any further comments::

The Forum feels that this will more accurately reflect the current pattern of provision. However, without knowing what proportion of spend will be included and how the use of proxy measures may affect the calculation it is impossible to have confidence in the approach at this stage. Forum stresses the importance of this being made transparent at stage 2 of the consultation.

8 Do you agree with our proposal to protect local authorities' funding through an overall minimum funding guarantee?

Yes

Please provide any further comments::

The Forum agrees that there should be a minimum funding guarantee. Forum believes that even with current levels of funding it will be extremely difficult to meet needs.

Changes to the way high needs funding supports mainstream schools

9 We welcome views on what should be covered in any national guidelines on what schools offer for their pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

Please provide any comments::

Topics to be covered in the national guidelines are:

- Inclusiveness.
- Preventative work including up skilling staff in schools.
- Early identification and ongoing assessment of needs and effective responses, including those related to mental health.
- Role of SENCOs and their importance in meeting needs and developing inclusive, whole school responses.
- Use of kite marks, their benefits and value added e.g. the Inclusive schools kite mark and the Dyslexia friendly schools kite mark etc.
- Developing effective learning pathways through to adulthood.
- Educational psychology – importance to inclusivity and evidence-based decision making; avoiding escalation of needs and costs; reducing need for out of area placements and; how the service can be differentiated and funded.
- Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). The implications of unmet SEMH needs for education settings, individuals and their families are significant. Guidelines should cover supporting children and young people with SEMH difficulties; best practice in identifying and addressing underlying needs or difficulties such as Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties, attachment difficulties and unhelpful thought processes; responding to inappropriate / disturbing / challenging behaviours so that they can be avoided or significantly reduced and managed through proactively promoting and supporting positive social, emotional and mental health.
- Developing differential approaches to top-up funding for early years and at Key Stage 3 and 4.
- Managing children in transition and how specialist provision can work with and assist mainstream schools.
- Evidence for which approaches achieve outcomes - including assessing the value of Additionally Resourced Provision and how this compares to experience in mainstream schools.

10 Do you agree with the proposed changes to the funding of special units in mainstream schools?

Disagree

Please provide any further comments::

The Forum is concerned that this proposal will add an unnecessary complication to the funding methodology. The current arrangement of £10k per places works well. It is clear and well understood by all schools. The proposal makes it less clear that the funding is intended for the pupils in the ARP. It risks creating uncertainty that special units have in their funding. This could result in mainstream schools deciding to close their special units if the funding is reducing or is less secure.

Incentives to encourage inclusivity are needed. This proposal represents a barrier and could result in significant gaps in provision. Forum also wishes to highlight concerns about how Ofsted treats schools with ARPs. These schools may be perceived to be lower performing in league tables for attainment. However, it is clear that this is not always the case as some outstanding schools also have ARPs.

11 We welcome examples of local authorities that are using centrally-retained funding in a strategic way to overcome barriers to integration and inclusion.

Please provide any comments::

The Forum highlights the following provision as examples of the strategic use of centrally-retained funding to overcome barriers to integration and encourage inclusion. All of the provision below is subject to regular performance monitoring by the local authority and is accountable to the Forum. Forum has established a SEND Working Group which is tasked with strategic planning of provision, ensuring that the provision below is meeting needs and represents value for money and making recommendations to Forum for making changes and allocating high needs funding.

Commissioned Provision in North Tyneside

Dyslexia Service – The service undertakes specialist assessment to identify underlying difficulties which impact on the development of pupils' literacy skills; offers support and advice to schools and parents together with individualised teaching programmes; and supports schools to achieve the Dyslexia Friendly Schools award. This is based at Southlands School.

Independent travel – using an onsite road safety and independent travel facility. This allows access to a program which teaches young people how to cross road properly and safely, and how to use pedestrian crossings. The school also has a replica metro station with a fully equipped metro carriage. This program is available to schools within North Tyneside for free. The service is based at Beacon Hill School.

Language and Communication Team – this is an authority-wide commissioned service based within Benton Dene School which includes the specialist nursery, Dene Communication Centre (DCC). The team is staffed by specialist teachers and support assistants and provides advice, support and teaching strategies for pupils with specific language and communication needs.

Moving On programme – This is a commissioned service managed by Southlands School. It comprises of an extensive accredited vocational offer to KS4 students with moderate learning difficulties from both special and mainstream settings. The bespoke work-based learning opportunities are accessible to all secondary schools. Students benefit from: an induction programme to prepare for participation; a comprehensive range of work-related, accredited modular programmes/curriculum delivered across a number of school and college sites and through other providers; support to achieve in all courses undertaken and; information and guidance to inform choice and participation in the selection of options.

Personal Achievement Through Learning Support (PALS) – This supports pupils at Key Stage 4 who are either hard to place due to their late arrival in the borough or were at the point of exclusion from their host school. This is delivered by Churchill Community College.

Portage/LEAPS – Offers: home visits working with parents to assess the child's current development, jointly plan, demonstrate and review appropriate play activities; supports parents when considering their child's future education options; offers assessment and written report on nursery/school entry; multi-disciplinary liaison to ensure a co-ordinated response to a child's identified needs; advice and support to staff in any pre-school setting that a child may attend; and offers informal play sessions at a toy library. The service is based at Beacon Hill School

Primary SEMH Provision - Offers support to schools and parents/carers with children aged 3 - 11 who experience difficulties with their social, emotional behaviours and their mental health. The service provides effective early intervention and Schools Forum has agreed additional funding to respond to the growing number of young people requiring support. The provision is based at Silverdale School.

Sensory Peripatetic - The Sensory Service provides appropriate and effective advice and support to children and young people with a visual and/or hearing loss. This support and advice is available from the point of diagnosis through school until the young person leaves education or reaches the age of 25 years. The service is based at Beacon Hill School.

12 We welcome examples of where centrally-retained funding is used to support schools that are very inclusive and have a high proportion of pupils with particular types of special education needs, or a disproportionate number of pupils with high needs.

Please provide any comments::

See response to Q11.

Changes to the way high needs funding supports independent special schools

13 Do you agree that independent special schools should be given the opportunity to receive place funding directly from the Education Funding Agency with the balance in the form of top-up funding from local authorities?

Disagree

Please provide any further comments::

The Forum does not agree with this proposal. It is concerned about the funding being top-sliced from the local authority's allocation. This could result in the local authority needing to fund additional commissioned places at the full rate rather than only providing the top-up. It is therefore unclear how this proposal would reduce the level of top-up funding from local authorities. Forum feels that the priority must be on creating local provision and having the resources and influence to adjust the number of places to meet demand.

Forum stresses the importance of minimising the need to place young people in high cost provision out of the area. The Forum and the local authority (in collaboration with other authorities in the region) have worked hard in recent years to reduce the need for out of area placements. This has been successful and is demonstrated by the reduction in extra-district funding.

The Forum is concerned that the impact of the funding changes could result in a reduction in local provision and an increase in dependency on high cost out of area provision. One of the significant challenges is finding placements for looked after children who have a statement. Forum is concerned that this will become even more difficult. The availability of capital funding is critical and the Forum would like to know more about how DfE intend to distribute this and what the proposed criteria will be for accessing funding.

Changes to the way high needs funding supports post-16 providers

14 We welcome views on the outline and principles of the proposed changes to post-16 place funding and on how specialist provision in further education colleges might be identified and designated.

Please provide any comments::

Forum agrees with the comments in this section of the consultation document about the importance of partnership working and that it would be helpful to clarify roles and responsibilities. Forum welcomes the introduction of the concept of special provision in FE colleges and encouraging collaboration. This should help to create coherent study programme with clear progression routes.

Equality analysis

15 We welcome comments on the equalities impact assessment.

Please provide any further comments::

Forum is concerned that the assessment does not address the risk of local authorities being unable to meet need due to lack of high needs funding and the consequences for equality.