



DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

HIGH NEEDS MONITORING SUB-GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE

The high needs block budget has a significant deficit budget position leading to the LA entering into a Safety Valve agreement with central government.

The role of the high needs monitoring sub-group is to work in partnership with the local authority to ensure appropriate steps are taken to address the current financial position. The focus of work for this authority, and for Schools Forum is to reduce this funding gap as much as possible, without compromising outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

This will mean work is focussed on ensuring children and young people with SEND achieve optimum outcomes in the most cost-effective way and that local provision is the first choice for children, young people and their families.

The review will:

- Consider the ongoing pressures / issues facing the high needs expenditure.
- Consider the targets of the safety valve programme.
- Ensure links into the local area written statement of action and safety valve are monitored and reported to Schools Forum

The high needs monitoring sub-group will make recommendations to Schools Forum including any funding changes.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The high needs monitoring sub-group will support the local authority to interrogate and provide professional challenge to:

- a) Review the financial impact of existing national SEND policy locally.
- b) Review and monitor the use of high needs funding to ensure that funding is allocated appropriately to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- c) Identify savings and pressures on the high needs block including any areas where immediate savings can be made.
- d) Review and prioritise proposed work programmes focusing on priority areas and arising issues (as agreed by Schools Forum).
- e) Provide regular updates to Schools Forum, offering advice and recommendations to Schools Forum regarding the use of high needs funding (through clear reporting) so that:
 - i. There is ongoing cognisance of issues related to the high needs block; and
 - ii. Schools Forum members have greater opportunity to take a proactive role in high needs budget decision-making, thereby improving transparency.
- f) Review and make recommendations to Schools Forum on directing the allocation of high needs funding in relation to:
 - i. Top-up rates, number of places and other specific financial pressures or issues identified by the high needs monitoring sub-group.
 - ii. The wider strategic agenda to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Underlying Principles

The high needs monitoring sub-group will ensure that: –

- The level and usage of high needs funding is appropriate and proportionate to need.
- The local authority has sufficient resource to meet any statutory functions.
- Funding is used efficiently and effectively (time limited where appropriate).

MEMBERSHIP

Schools Forum sub-groups can be wider than the constituent Schools Forum members, this reflects the specialist needs of that group. Groups should also ensure balanced representation of all members as well as wider representatives and observers.

The Chair should be voted by Schools Forum. Each member shall be elected or appointed for a period not normally exceeding one academic year.

Academy reps 3 Primary	Paula Ayto – Principal, Reid Street Primary School (Chair) Deborah Hindson – SENDCO, Heathfield Academy Alex Nelson – SENDO, West Park Academy
Academy reps 2 Secondary	Owen Inglis - Head Teacher, Wyvern Academy James Keating – Executive Head Teacher, Hummersknott Academy
Special School rep (1)	Caroline Green, Executive Principal, Beaumont Hill Academy
PRU/Maintained sector	Sally Hudson – Rise Carr College
Non-school rep	Andy Gilpin - Darlington College
Other	
Local Authority The following local authority officers shall also be observer members of the high needs monitoring sub-group and provide professional technical support to assist the consideration and work of the group.	Emma Clennell - Finance Manager Jo Littler - Interim Head of Service for SEND & Inclusion Helen Watson – Childrens Services Commissioning Manager Eleanor Marshall – Clerk/Education Partnerships Officer

Please note:

- These representatives would each in turn be able to delegate attendance to a representative should they be unable to attend.
- It is open to a Schools Forum to set up working groups of members to discuss specific issues, and to produce draft advice and decisions for the Schools Forum itself to consider.

- To meet these responsibilities, the local authority will ensure the group have access to good quality, up-to date data.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The high needs monitoring sub-group will meet on a half termly basis as a minimum and with extra-ordinary meetings as required.

Meetings will be announced on the [Darlington Schools Forum website page](#) and all papers, agendas and minutes will be published in accordance with ESFA guidance and where papers are confidential publication will follow advice provided by democratic services.

REPORTING

The Interim Head of Service for SEND & Inclusion will capture responses/write a report on behalf of the sub-group setting out the content and recommendations to Schools Forum. This will be shared for sub-group approval prior to recommendations being made. The Chair of the sub-group (normally the Schools Forum Vice Chair) will provide updates to the Schools Forum, and where appropriate a nominated sub-group member if this is not possible.

APPENDIX 1 FROM EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY GUIDANCE

1. It's open to a Schools Forum to set up working groups of members to discuss specific issues, and to produce draft advice and decisions for the Schools Forum itself to consider.
2. The groups can also include wider representation, for example, an early year's reference group can represent all the different types of provider to consider the detail of the early years single funding formula.
3. The reference group would then be able to give its considered view on the local authority's proposals to the Schools Forum.
4. The Schools Forum should not delegate actual decisions or the finalisation of advice to a working group, as this may have the effect of excluding legitimate points of view. These have proved effective for larger local authorities; examples of some working groups are for high needs and early years.