

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

19th May 2015

ITEM NO 10

DSG HIGH NEEDS FUNDING FORMULA REFORM – PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To update Forum regarding the progress on the changes to the DSG High Needs Funding Formula

Background

2. As part of the SEN funding reforms a mandatory cost threshold of £6,000 per pupil was introduced as part of the notional SEN element of the school's formula. Darlington initially negotiated an extension to implementing this change but we now need to progress to full implementation.
3. Last year a working group from schools looked at the feasibility of an actual costs model, alongside that the local authority has been monitoring the implantation of the SEN funding reforms across other local authority areas and also working with the five Tees Valley authorities.

The Way Forward

4. Stockton Borough Council have developed a costed provision map which is now the preferred model for determining actual support costs, and which we hope will be used across the whole of the Tees Valley and eventually other North East authorities.
5. Following a meeting last week with school's Business Managers it was agreed that after half term the Stockton costed provision map would be shared with schools to standardise and identify the spending on SEN resources. The provision map will use a Darlington average for staff costs to ensure equity across schools.
6. Schools would have until the end of October to complete the costed provision map for all pupils who have SEN support needs in excess of £6,000. The £6,000 notional SEN threshold is in addition to the standard per pupil funding (AWPU) the school receives.
7. The local authority will process and collate all the completed forms in early November. In the meantime we will be asking for volunteers from schools to form a working group who will undertake a moderation exercise of all costed provision maps in late November/early December.
8. The data gathered through this exercise will
 - provide the baseline data for the changes to the SEN budget
 - determine the impact on the overall high needs budget and whether there needs to be some form of transitional protection on school budgets
 - support a full review of the current local authority SEN banding system

9. Implementation will take place in financial year 2016/17. These changes will ensure that the top-up money follows the pupils who need it. The notional SEN funding allocation (for support needs under £6,000) will continue to be calculated using the current methodology.
10. Alongside this the SENCO's network has agreed to look at what school's support should look like across the four broad areas of need identified in the SEN Code of Practice:
 - Communication and interaction
 - Cognition and learning
 - Social, emotional and mental health
 - Sensory and/or physical needs
11. Further clarification on these areas of need can be found in the SEN Code of Practice starting at paragraph 6.28
12. This work will feed into the band descriptors, as will examples we are gathering from other local authorities. This will ensure that funding is driven by level of need and not the identified primary needs i.e. autism, BESD etc.

Recommendations

13. That School Forum note the content of this report.

Paul Richardson
Head of 16-19 (Learning & Skills)