



Sheffield Schools Forum 26 February 2024 Executive Summary

Establishment of SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

The Forum was asked to approve the establishment of the SEN inclusion fund:

- Local authorities are required to have a SENIF for all children with special educational needs (SEN) eligible for, or taking up, the new and existing entitlements.
- Sheffield's SEN inclusion funding arrangements have been reviewed – moving away from a set hour formula to a banding system which can be applied for and agreed for the academic year but paid to early years providers termly.
- The process is now clear and transparent, resulting in an increase in SENIF applications.
- There is a growing number of children with complex additional needs who may need to access early years provision from the age of 9 months.
- The proposed applications and process will be funded from the £400k SENIF for 2-year-olds and under.

The Forum **approved**:

- The establishment of the SENIF for 2-year-olds and under.
- A 0.2 FTE permanent Business Support Officer from April 2024 to support the SENIF applications and process, to be funded from the SENIF.

SEND Consultant's Review

The Forum was asked to consider the findings of the report (which can be found as an Appendix to Paper 4 in the [Schools Forum papers](#)) and provide insight/feedback.

- Despite significant improvements in the compliance of Statutory SEND Assessment and Annual Reviews, as well as positive feedback from parents in the 20-week process, there has been a significant rise in the number of Tribunals, particularly regarding special school placements and a rise in schools raising concern about the children they have with EHC Plans and placements made after consultation.
- As a result of this, in May 2023 a commission was established for a consultant to undertake a review of the SEND statutory assessment and review the service which quickly expanded to consider how the SEND partnership of Education, health, and care work together to make recommendations we could then act upon.
- Two reports were completed which outline information that had been gathered and contain recommendations and work is underway to address recommendations.

In addition, further work is being carried out regarding sufficiency and a paper will be brought back to the June Schools Forum.

Funded Early Learning (FEL) Rate and Allocation 2024/25 and Early Years Outturn

Forum members:

- **Noted** the overall early years income allocation of £57.01m to Sheffield for 2024/25 – an increase of £19.18m (which is subject to the sector responding to the supply requirements).
- **Noted** the increases to hourly income rates as set out in Paper 5.
- **Noted** the new funding streams for working parents of 2-year-olds, payable from 1 April 2024, and under 2-year-olds payable from 1 September 2024.
- **Approved** the recommendations of the Early Years Working Group to increase the base rate as follows:
 - To pay eligible under 2-year-olds (of working parents) £10.31 per hour.
 - To increase the funding for 2-year-olds (for both deprived and working parents) by £1.95 per hour to £7.58 per hour.
 - To increase the funding for 3&4-year-olds by 18p per hour, increasing the base rate to £5.06.
- **Noted** that an additional £0.44 per hour deprivation supplement is accessible for all children who fulfil the deprivation criteria across all early years provision.

In addition, the Forum **noted** that:

- The 2022/23 positive outturn of £1,047k was paid to Sheffield early years providers in Spring 2024 in line with the process agreed in the September 2023 Schools Forum meeting.
- The £183k Disability Access Fund balances, from the 2022/23 outturn, were distributed in line with the process agreed in the September 2022 Schools Forum Meeting.

High Needs Block Funding 2024/25

The Forum noted the overall arrangements and 2024/25 budget requirements for pupils and students with high needs and that:

- The total resource allocation of £39.96m for special schools in 2024/25 is based on commissioned place numbers.
- The funding does not keep pace with growing demand, and due to a lag in the system, we have a shortfall of £3.7m for 2024/25.
- Work has been carried out with the SEND Funding Working Group to review the costs of schools with split sites, and a one-off payment of £50k has been approved for 2024/25 to help with cost pressures.
- The Operational Guidance recommends an increase in rate for special schools of between 0-0.5%. However, Sheffield has agreed an average of 2% - an increase of £438 per special school place.
- A provision of £6m has been identified to fund additional specialist pre- and post-16 provision, but this may not be adequate.
- Base funding for integrated resources (IRs) is also being increased by an average of 2% - from £10k to £10,568.
- Our investment in the locality model is expected to be just over £6m and further details will be shared at the June Schools Forum.
- The Sheffield Inclusion Centre budget has been set at £4.6m.

- We have made a provision of £3.8m to increase the number of college places.

School Budgets (inc. Central School Services Block, de-delegation) 2024/25

The Forum noted the contents of the paper and **approved the 2024/25 budget for primary and secondary schools set at £453m** (as per Paper 7, Appendix 1 of the [Schools Forum papers](#)). Key points to note:

- Overall, Sheffield will receive an increase of £52.11m Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2024/25.
- The Mainstream Schools Additional Grant of £15m has now been rolled in to DSG.
- We continue to move significantly, but proportionately, closer to the National Funding Formula (NFF) using the principles agreed at the December 2023 Forum.
- We have increased primary AWPU by £20 per pupil over the NFF level to support smaller schools and those without high levels of deprivation.
- The Pupil Premium rates have increased by 1.6% on average.
- The Teachers' Pay Additional Grant which will continue to be paid as a separate grant.
- The one-off grant for Additional Support for Schools in Financial Difficulties will be distributed in line with requests from the local deficit recovery support plans.
- Sheffield's Growth Funding has been significantly reduced from £2.9m to £1.6m.
- Regarding the Central Schools Services Block – the Council is continuing to absorb the reduction in the Historic Commitments element (£486k).

In addition, section 2.2 of Paper 7 reminds schools that they will receive a copy of their **rates bill for 2024/25, but this should not be paid. However**, we are advised that **academies should pay and claim back any previous years' bill adjustments** that are received in 2024/25.

Historical Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Debt Update

- Further to discussion at the September Schools Forum regarding non-payment of historic debt, letters were sent out at the beginning of November 2023.
- As a result, and as at the end of January 2024, the PRU had received payments of £53k, leaving a balance outstanding of £284k owed by 26 schools across 19 different academy trusts/schools.
- The reason cited for non-payment was the lack of legal justification for the charge.

The Forum endorsed the proposal to send a further letter reminding schools of their moral obligation and making it clear that any unpaid charges will have a financial impact on all schools.

Forum Name Change

- The Forum representative for the early years sector previously asked if the Forum would consider changing its name to include Early Years in the title.
- It was agreed this would exclude other sectors represented on the Forum, for example post-16. It was therefore concluded that the Forum should instead be renamed **The Sheffield Education Funding Forum** to ensure inclusivity of all education sectors involved and represented.

Forum papers are available to download via [Sheffield Schools Forum](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/sheffield-schools-forum)
(<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/sheffield-schools-forum>)

You can also download a list of Forum members on this page should you wish to raise an issue/ask a question.

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