

SEND Funding Update February 2025

Key Messages

Forum members are asked to note the:

- Background information below.
- Current position in Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) banding.
- Next steps for funding allocation.

1. Introduction/background

- 1.1. A review of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) high-needs funding began in 2021.
- 1.2. In 2022, we procured a resource allocation system called 'Formulate for SEND'. This is a banded funding system.
- 1.3. Since then, our SENDSARS practitioners have been completing needs profiles to allocate an annual funding band between 1 and 10 for all children with an EHCP.
- 1.4. The next stage of this work is to look at short-term and long-term options for funding children who currently receive 'SEN Support'.

2. EHCP Banding update

- 2.1. We are well underway with retrospectively banding all existing EHCPs in mainstream provision as well as banding all new EHCPs that are approved. (70% complete).
- 2.2. This should create a more consistent approach to funding for schools and the local authority as there will be consistent approaches to the funding for pupils in their school.
- 2.3. We are continuing to improve the quality assurance of these needs assessments, to make sure the funding band most appropriately matches the needs of the young person.
- 2.4. From the thousands of banded plans that have been sent back to school there have only been 17 reviews requested from four schools. (Imosphere has reported this is the lowest number of reviews they have seen with the rollout of the system.)

3. 'SEN Support' funding

- 3.1. We are committed to reviewing all elements of our funding to support children and young people with SEND. This means looking at the funding and resourcing localities have available to them for children who are 'SEN Support'. This relates to children who do not have an EHCP but may still have additional needs which a school requires financial help in supporting.

- 3.2. We understand that any decisions made which might affect the funding schools receive needs to be undertaken with thorough planning and appropriate consultation.
- 3.3. We have reinstated the SEND Funding advisory group, which allows us to consult with the sector prior to any decisions moving through the governance arrangements and sign offs.
- 3.4. We will be working with the advisory group to propose short-term funding models for September 2025-26.
- 3.5. The year-long funding model will allow us the time to map out the current financial and service provision that is available across the local area and into the localities from across the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Partnership. This provision-mapping should allow us to see where funding has been successful in improving outcomes for young people with SEND. It may also indicate where there are gaps, or possible duplication in provision that is offered.
- 3.6. This work should allow us to create a more robust support network across the SEND and AP partnership, to ensure that children with SEND are having their needs met at the earliest opportunity, by the appropriate team, whether that be within the school, local authority, health partners, or the voluntary sector.

4. Cost Implication to the High Needs Block

- 4.1. The High Needs Block is currently overcommitted, and we are in the process of developing a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit management plan to address this financial challenge.
- 4.2. The expansion of SEND support provision will lead to a short-term increase in the overall deficit. However, the strategy is based on a front-loaded investment approach, which is expected to yield long-term benefits. By strengthening early intervention and mainstream support, we anticipate a reduction in demand for expensive specialist placements over time, ultimately helping to contain future pressures.
- 4.3. A key priority we will be mapping existing SEND provision delivered by partners and stakeholders to ensure schools can effectively access and utilise available resources. Maximising the use of existing provision, alongside additional targeted SEND support, will enhance early intervention efforts, helping to reduce the need for more intensive and expensive specialist support. This approach is intended to deliver better outcomes for children and young people while promoting financial sustainability.

5. Recommendations

Forum members are asked to:

- **Note** the proposed next steps and the strategic approach.