

Item 6C 2019/20 High Needs Commissioning Arrangements and Commissioned Places

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Schools Forum with an update on High Needs funding arrangements for 2019/20, including commissioned places and top-up arrangements.

This report also provides information on proposals to consult on changes to the rates for Additional Resourced Provisions (ARPs).

Introduction

1. The Department for Education (DfE) published the 'High Needs funding: operational guide 2019/2020' on 26th September 2018.
2. There are no significant changes to the High Needs funding system in 2019/20.
3. An additional £250m was allocated nationally to support High Needs budgets. Barnet received £0.964m in 2018/19 and will receive the same additional amount again in 2019/20. At this stage, it is unclear whether the funding will continue in future years.
4. Adjustments (recoupment) will continue to be made to the High Needs block to reflect places funded directly by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). In addition, a further adjustment will be processed in regard to place funding in FE colleges and post-16 charitable and commercial providers (CCPs).

High needs place funding

5. LAs currently have flexibility to determine place funding arrangements locally for maintained schools and pupil referral units (PRUs). An additional change notification process applies where the ESFA collects details on place numbers in academies, FE colleges and CCPs for the academic year 2019/20.
6. The LA has conducted an initial review of the place numbers anticipated from September 2019. A summary is outlined in Appendix 1.
7. The High Needs Block Budgets for 2019/20 as shown under S251 is attached in Appendix 2.
8. The LA bears the ultimate responsibility for decisions on top-up funding, as it is accountable for spending from its High Needs budget. Funding regulations only permit the funding of occupied places.
9. In line with funding regulations, top-up funding is paid on EHCP estimates with an end of term adjustment in order to match actual occupied places, as submitted on the termly HN return from providers.
10. Funding is paid to maintained Barnet schools within their school budget shares. In most cases – depending on the payment option selected by the school – this means top-up funding is paid on a monthly basis.
11. Academies and free schools will continue to receive their HN top-up funding on a monthly basis, as was the case in 2018/19.

Consultation on proposed changes to ARP funding

The following gives a summary of the planned consultation to the proposed changes to ARP funding which is due to begin shortly. The consultation will begin in early April and end mid-May, with the implementation of changes starting in September 2019.

Some of the issues that have prompted the need to look at the ARP funding are:

- There are different top up rates that currently exist for schools in the same phase with the same specialism.
- In comparison to similar provision for children and young people with the same level and type of need in other local authorities, the rate paid by Barnet is much higher. Local benchmarking exercises have found that rates in Enfield, Brent and Hertfordshire are all significantly lower than both the current and proposed rates.
- As Special School places are increasing, it is necessary to redress this balance by reducing ARP funding in order to maintain per pupil funding levels in special schools.

Proposed Changes

In order to remove the inequity of funding bands that currently exist across the same designated provision and align the top up values with special school funding, it is proposed that top up rates will be the same for ARPs that cater for the same area of SEN. This will then ensure that schools with the same designated provision will receive the same levels of top up funding. It will, however, mean reductions in the top-up funding for ARPs and a shift in the balance of resources from ARPs to Special Schools.

With the proposed changes to funding arrangements for ARPs, there is a clear expectation that children and young people in this provision will continue to have their needs met, as funding allocations will be based on an assessment of need and of the cost of supporting pupils with different types and levels of need.

There will need to be some flexibility across provision to take account of parental preference, as well as individual needs. Where a child's needs are greater than their peers in the same or similar provision, in future, this will be treated as an exception and, in these circumstances, additional top up funding to meet need will be applied on an individual basis.

A consultation document will be published by early April and will be issued to:

- All schools in Barnet

- Parent carers of children living in Barnet and attending an ARPs

Recommendations

1. The Schools Forum is asked to note the commissioned high needs places for the 2019/20 school year.
2. The Schools Forum is asked to note the proposal to consult on changes to ARP top-up rates.