

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	Reading Schools Forum		
DATE:	13 th July 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	6
TITLE:	High Needs Block (HNB) update		
SERVICE:	Children, Education & Early Help Services	WARDS:	All
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update to Schools Forum on the progress made on delivering the SEND Strategy

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR SCHOOLS FORUM

- 2.1 To provide feedback regarding the proposals for use of the Inclusion Funding element of the High Needs Block
- 2.2 To provide feedback on any further actions needed to progress the delivery of the SEND strategy and reduce the deficit and future pressure on the High Needs Block

3 POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council has strategic aims to establish Reading as a learning city and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit, to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all. Education and the funding of education is a key factor in the achievement of this aim.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 It was agreed at the meeting on 19th October 2017 that the Schools Forum would receive an update at each meeting regarding the progress of the SEND Strategy.

- 4.2 A number of actions were agreed to be taken forward by the Strand 1 Working Group of the SEND Strategy Board, which have been completed and reported to previous meetings.
- 4.3 The proposals regarding the future of specialist provision across Reading were reported to the May 2018 meeting, and the recommendations will be considered by the SEND Strategy Board on 17th July. If approved, Council Committee approval will be sought to initiate the process for commissioning these.
- 4.4 As part of the Children's Transformation Programme, 5 sub-groups have been set up which will report to the Children's Board, one of which is focusing on SEND. A Specialist Commissioner is being recruited for 2 years to assist in the development of a commissioning framework for SEND to support the continuing reduction in the High Needs Block deficit and mitigate future budget pressures. Part of this work is to ensure we have clarity over the cost breakdown of out of authority placements so that we can maximize the contributions from other partners where appropriate and ensure that we are getting best value from these placements linked to pupil needs and progress. An implementation plan will identify the key actions to achieve this.
- 4.5 At the Schools Forum meeting on 15th March 2018 an update was provided setting out the suggested use of the Inclusion Support Allocation of the High Needs Block to ensure the most efficient and effective use of this budget:
- to develop and implement a commissioned (funded) school to school support model that draws on the best SEND practice in Reading and targets resources consistently at the greatest areas of need;
 - to redefine a process for accessing exceptional needs funding to support identified pupils and ensure a more consistent approach across the borough;
- 4.6 At the Schools Forum meeting on 24th May 2018 members of Schools Forum were advised that proposals were being developed for use of the inclusion budget of the High Needs Block to support meeting exceptional needs and develop support for inclusion.
- 4.8 This report provides an update on the development of a protocol for allocation of the Supporting Inclusion budget which has replaced the Cluster Funding and Hard To Place Funding.
- 4.6 In line with the School Forum Powers and Responsibilities (2017), the Council is informing the Schools Forum of proposals, and in addition is seeking the views of the Schools Forum regarding these proposals which is deemed good practice, although it is a Local Authority decision.

5 EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS INCLUSION SUPPORT FUNDING

- 5.1 Attached at Appendix A is a proposal for allocating exceptional needs inclusion support funding to support pupils without an EHCP with exceptional short term needs and those that are placed through the In Year Fair Access protocol.
- 5.2 Members of Strand 1 of the SEND Strategy Board have considered the proposal and agreed that this should be progressed as proposed.

6. SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS WITH HIGH LEVELS OF EHCPs

- 6.1 Schools are required to fund up to £6k for support to pupils identified as requiring SEND Support and the first £6k for those with EHCPs. A number of schools have expressed concerns over the challenges of the budget when they have a disproportionate number/percentage of pupils with EHCPs. This is often as a consequence of a good reputation for inclusive practice and meeting SEND needs.
- 6.2 Discussions have been held as part of the SEND Strategy work regarding a mechanism for supporting inclusive schools with high numbers of EHCPs. Attached as Appendix B is a proposal for a mechanism to support these schools with accessing sufficient resources to meet the needs of these pupils.
- 6.3 Strand 1 considered some options for modelling this at their meeting on 3rd July 2018 and the proposals have been amended accordingly.

7. DEVELOPING A SCHOOL TO SCHOOL SUPPORT MODEL FOR SEND

- 7.1 We are considering the development of Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) for SEND. We are also looking at evidence based successful audit tools to support the review of SEND provision in schools. We plan to train SLEs and other lead practitioners of SEND to support these audits as well as the action planning following these, and the monitoring of progress.
- 7.2 It is proposed that a proportion of this budget be used to support the training of local facilitators (SLEs) to support this programme.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Finalise and circulate the inclusion funding guidance and application forms.
- 8.2 Model the funding implications for the agreed mechanism for supporting schools with high levels of EHCPs.