

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**SCHOOLS FORUM**

**UPDATE ON HIGH NEEDS FUNDING**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide a briefing to Schools Forum on work being undertaken to review the bandings and use of High Needs Funding for children with SEND.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The High Needs element of the Dedicated Schools Grant supports schools and local authority to provide support for children with SEND. This includes the costs of some elements of local authority SEND staffing, as well as paying for specialist placements, and providing the banding rates for top up funding for children whose needs mean that they cannot be adequately supported using the notional element of the SEND funding.
- 2.2 Locally, the bandings for children with an EHCP who attend mainstream schools in North Lincolnshire are due to be reviewed; it is proposed that the Local Authority work with schools through the Primary Consortium and the Secondary Heads and Principals to evaluate the current funding levels. Additionally, work is underway to benchmark local funding bandings for SEND in comparison to regional neighbours. It is intended that this work will place the LA in a good position to bring revised bandings proposal to Schools Forum in the autumn, in readiness for the financial year 2025/2026.
- 2.3 To address more immediate issues, under the DFE funding rules for High Needs, local authorities can make arrangements for the use of exceptional funding. The attached working draft exceptional funding protocol is being developed to ensure that schools are funded to meet exceptional circumstances, for example where there are significant in-year changes to the number of children with an EHCP, or where children have, through their EHC Plan had an agreement for independent specialist provision but where no such provision is available.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 In North Lincolnshire, our shared ambition is that children thrive in their families, achieve in their schools and flourish in their communities. Ensuring schools are supported to meet children's needs at the lowest level, enabling children to stay within mainstream where ever possible is key in this ambition. Whilst the work to review and benchmark North Lincolnshire SEND funding bands for mainstream schools takes place, an exceptional funding process would support schools to meet children's emerging or escalating needs.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Agree the proposal to put in place an exceptional funding process for schools to meet children's individual needs where needed
- 4.2 Do not accept the proposal for exceptional funding

### **5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 High needs funding will support piloting this approach. Children's onward journeys and life chances are shown to be better where they can remain in mainstream schools, the costs of Independent Specialist Provision for children are high and availability poor. This approach will support more children to remain in local mainstream schools.

### **6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Ensuring that wherever possible, children are able to access high quality inclusive education which meets their individual needs through strong, inclusive schools is pivotal to their future education and career pathways.

### **7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Initial discussions have taken place with Headteachers, and the PIP forum. Consultation is on going with regard to banding changes in readiness for next financial year

### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Schools Forum accept the proposal for SEND Exceptional Funding.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR EDUCATION

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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report –**

[High needs funding: 2024 to 2025 operational guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101212/High-needs-funding-2024-to-2025-operational-guide.pdf)

[The notional SEN budget for mainstream schools: operational guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101212/High-needs-funding-2024-to-2025-operational-guide.pdf)