

FUNDING FOR ALTERNATIVE PROVISION AND HARD TO PLACE PUPILS 2014-15

Purpose of the Report

1. To outline the issues that have arisen in relation to funding for hard to place pupils since the implementation of the exclusion trial for secondary schools in Wiltshire.
2. To present a proposal for additional funding in 2014-15 to support those costs.

Background

3. In 2011 Wiltshire Council accepted the DfE's invitation to take part in a national trial on permanent exclusion and alternative provision. As part of this it decided to close its secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), the Young People's Support Service (YPSS), which was at the time in special measures, and to devolve its budget to schools.
4. Under a Power To Innovate Order the majority of secondary schools accepted the responsibility for providing suitable education for permanently excluded pupils. In effect, although schools could continue to permanently exclude pupils, they remained responsible for their achievement and for making provision for them. Secondary schools have been able to use the devolved funding to develop a wide range of provision and work preventatively resulting in a dramatic reduction in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since the trial began in April 2012, see Table 1 Appendix A. Although the trial is due to finish in June 2014 it is proposed to extend the current agreement by using a service level agreement.
5. In reviewing the progress of the trial it has been identified that since 2011 there has been a steady increase in the number of Hard to Place Pupils coming into Wiltshire from other local authorities, see Table 2 Appendix A. Many of these have been permanently excluded and are already attending PRUs or in other forms of alternative provision. In the past such pupils would have been accommodated by YPSS, but now they are placed by Fair Access Panels with individual schools that have to make provision for them out of the devolved funding. If a pupil has already been attending a PRU and requires full time alternative provision this can cost anything from £15,000 to £30,000 per pupil per year. Funding devolved to schools is a fixed amount and so the increasing number of pupils coming in to Wiltshire requiring high cost packages has increased the pressure on the budget allocated across secondary schools to support the trial.
6. In addition there has been an increase in the numbers of Year 11 pupils who are not hard to place coming into Wiltshire mid-year from other authorities. Although these are not as challenging as Hard to Place Pupils they almost always require additional support and often individual tuition in order to reduce the impact on their achievement of a change of schools so late in their academic careers.
7. A working group comprising officers from the local authority and secondary head teachers has been set up to review the progress of the trial and to develop the SLA for continuation of the current agreement. As part of that work the group has considered the impact of Hard to Place pupils and made proposals as to how the impact could be mitigated.

Main Considerations

8. It is obviously difficult to predict the number of out of county Hard to Place and out of county normal year 11s entering Wiltshire on an annual basis. In terms of Hard to Place Pupils Table 2 Appendix A shows an apparently significant increase between 2011 -12 and 2012-13 with figures for 2013-14 almost at the level of 2012-13 by

December of the year. The number of normal Year 11s seems to fluctuate with numbers in 2013-14 being significantly less than 2012-13.

9. The group has based its proposals on an assumption of 30 Hard to Place Pupils and 20 normal Year 11s and to use the Place Plus model of funding for behaviour to work one sum of £8,000 per pupil. This is about half the minimum cost of full-time alternative provision. The assumption would be that some pupils would cost more than this and some less. This would be a total of £400,000.
10. It is proposed that the grant would be distributed as follows
 - The total will be distributed to each partnership In Year Fair Access Panel in April for the first period April to October based on the historic numbers they placed in 2012 to 2013.
 - The money will be allocated to each pupil by the In Year Fair Access Panel on the basis of their view of what is needed to meet a pupil's needs based upon an agreed set of criteria.
 - The LA representative attending the panel will act as a moderator ensuring there is some consistency between provision across the three panels allowing for the contextual differences that exist especially in terms of the availability and cost of provision.
 - In October the April to October spend will be reviewed so that the distribution for November to March can take account of any changes in the number of out of county hard to place pupils coming into each area.
 - At the end of March there will be an end of year reconciliation between the three panels and adjustments made to the pattern of distribution for the next financial year.
 - A modest surplus can be rolled over as a single sum. A larger surplus i.e. above £x would need to be deducted from the funding grant for the following year.
 - The grant will be paid in April to Learning Futures (West Wilts) Ltd that will take responsibility for the administration of it and the distribution to the three panels.

Financial Implications

11. The funding for this proposal would need to be identified from within the high needs block or from the DSG reserve. If funding is identified from the DSG reserve then this would only be available on a one off basis whilst the need to fund Hard to Place pupils represents an ongoing cost pressure.
12. At the time of writing this report funding within the high needs block has not yet been identified. Further work will take place so that options can be presented to Schools Forum at the meeting.

Views of the SEN Working Group

13. The proposal was considered by the SEN Working Group on 10th January. the views of the group can be summarised as follows:
 - That the group generally supported the proposal to ensure that funding needed to be identified to enable appropriate provision to be made for this group of pupils;
 - That if funding is allocated to the Fair Access Panels as proposed there need to be robust criteria and moderation processes to ensure that panels are consistent and equitable in the allocation of the funding;
 - That any funding allocated for this purpose needed to be kept separate from the main devolved funding formula for alternative provision so it could be monitored and targeted appropriately;

- That funding needs to be identified and that if funding could only be identified from one off reserves then work would need to take place during 2014-15 to identify a more sustainable funding model for 2015-16 onwards (and that this might include seeking support from the EFA to fund growth in hard to place pupils).

Proposals

14. Schools Forum is asked to consider the proposal for additional funding for Hard to Place pupils and to agree the amount and source of funding to be allocated.

CAROLYN GODFREY
DIRECTOR, CHILDREN & EDUCATION

Report Authors: Colin Kay, Consultant Head Teacher and Chris Whitfield, EOTAS Co-ordinator

e-mail: chris.whitfield@wiltshire.gov.uk