

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT (1)

Meeting: Schools Forum

Place: Kennet Room - County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

Date: Thursday 23 January 2025

Time: 1.30 pm

The Agenda for the above meeting was published on 15 January 2024. Additional documents are now available and are attached to this Agenda Supplement.

Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Lisa Pullin, of Democratic Services, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, direct line 01225 713015 or email committee@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications on direct lines (01225)713114/713115.

This Agenda and all the documents referred to within it are available on the Council's website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk

6 **Updates from Working Groups** *(Pages 3 - 10)*

- The minutes of the Early Years Reference Group meeting on 9 January 2025.
- The joint meeting of the School Funding and SEN Working Group meeting on 14 January 2025.

8 **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Top Up Funding - Consultation Report** *(Pages 11 - 34)*

The report is now available and attached.

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 21 January 2025

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Early Years Reference Group Meeting Thursday 9 January 2025

1. Welcome and introductions

Lyssy Bolton (LB), Jane Boulton (JB), Lucy Bracher (LB) Lucy-Anne Bryant (LAB), Emma Cooke (EC), Jackie Day (JD), Emma Egan (EE), Charlotte Forester (CF), Lisa Fryer (joined 3pm), Jenny Harvey (JH) (notes), Sarah Hawkins (SH), Julia Honeywell (JHo), Kirsty Merrifield (KM), Debbie Muir (DM), Marie Taylor (MT), Karen Venner (KV) (Chair), Kerry Yeates (KY), Hannah Yeates (HY), Emily Wood (EW)

Introductions were made and Tracy Hodge (new CM representative) welcomed to the group.

2. Apologies

Kai Muxlow (KM) and Naomi Wright (NW).

3. Minutes of last meeting (26 November 2024)

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

4. Matters arising

Item 5 – HV meeting. EC confirmed that yes this had been done, but then cancelled. It will be reorganised for another date.

Item 7 – lobbying letter and article. KV will organise.

Item 9 – Education Safeguarding Group information. Completed.

Item 9 – Bath College contact. LAB to speak to KV.

Item 9 – Mid term starts and payment dates. JH confirmed that this has been initially looked at but needs further investigation to see what is feasible. A few group members stated that the issue of maternity leave is problematic and that it would be beneficial to have dates on the website showing when a parent can start claiming their funding on their return from maternity leave.

ACTION: KV to organise lobbying letter and article
LAB to contact KV for Bath College contact
JH to add annual maternity leave funding dates to website and in EY newsletter

5. Budget Monitoring (MT)

MT shared budget monitoring report as at end November 2024 which shows a £2.7 million underspend, largely due to 3- & 4-year-olds. The under 2's budget is currently overspending due to demand for spaces, but this was not unexpected. KV enquired whether other local authorities were experiencing the same situation as Wiltshire, but this was not known.

JB asked who Wiltshire's statistical neighbours were, and these were confirmed as Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Devon, Cambridgeshire, West Sussex, Bath and North East Somerset, Worcestershire, Hampshire, North Somerset and Dorset.

ACTION: None

6. EY Block – 25/26 Funding Rates Options and Consultation (MT)

MT had shared a 2025/26 funding rates consultation document with the group prior to the meeting.

Funding has previously been based on the following two principles:

1. Fully passporting 100% 2-year-old disadvantaged funding to encourage take-up and allow flexibility
2. Maximise 3- & 4-year-old funding rate as much as possible as this is the largest group of children attracting largest amount of funding into settings.

All agreed that these principles continue to be relevant and should remain. MT confirmed Wiltshire needs to passport at least 96% of each of the funding streams into the sector increased from 95% in 2024/25. All potential options are above this threshold.

MT went through the potential options available for consultation and group discussion followed.

LB queried why, as a recognised vulnerable cohort, disadvantaged 2-year-olds didn't have a higher hourly rate than that received by the DfE. MT confirmed that this funding stream is being fully passported to the sector and there is risk to giving more than we have received from the DfE. LAB asked if locally a decision could be made to increase the hourly rate by £0.02, but MT advised that this could be setting a precedent and taking it over 100% pass through could mean reduced future increases which were difficult to explain.

Whilst Option 3 was MT's recommendation, some members of the group felt the DfE funding of the 9m to 2-year-olds was higher than required (in order to attract new baby rooms) and expressed a preference to reduce that rate and increase the 3- & 4-year-old rate if possible. Option 4 was left open to do some live modelling in the meeting. After on the spot modelling and discussion the group unanimously agreed on Option 4:

Funding stream	Proposed 2025/26 hourly rate	% increase on 2024/25 rate
Under 2's (9mth-23mths)	£9.98	3.6
2-year-old working parent	£7.45	3.9
2-year-old disadvantaged	£7.76	3.7
3- & 4-year-olds (universal and working parent)	£5.52	5.9

ACTION: MT to take Option 4 to Schools Forum as Local Authority and EYRG's 2025/26 recommendation

7. Family Hubs (LB)

LB reported there is still a waiting list for 1:1 support but are signposting to other services and offering regular check ins to clients whilst waiting, navigators are located around the county and there are currently 26 parenting programmes running. Please contact LB if you have any Family Hub topics you would like to know more about, and she will bring these to future meetings.

MT asked if the waiting list is due to need or because the Family Hubs aren't fully staffed yet. LB confirmed both; need is high, and 2 more posts are being recruited for. Other options to manage the waiting list are being investigated.

KM suggested that an EY Newsletter article on where navigators are located would be good with a link so providers can signpost parents. LB will sort.

ACTION: LB to organise EY Newsletter article on navigators and services

8. Early Years Expansion Grant (LAB/All)

LAB reported no change from the last meeting. Providers have inferred that additional costs were viewed as a barrier to considering expansion which has been reported back to the DfE.

There is still half the funding so if anyone is interested in explaining their provision, they can contact the team to discuss it further.

KM queried whether a provider could apply for funding to adapt their provision if they have an overall number of places but more of one cohort than another. LAB confirmed this would be possible.

ACTION: None

9. Wraparound care (LAB)

LAB passed her congratulations to Nicola and her team. The team have approved delivery of an additional 3748 places, 1500 of which have been made by Wiltshire Council.

ACTION: None

10. Business rates

There was general discussion about business rates, the impact of increases across the board from 1 April 2025, VAT exemptions and policy differences between Scotland, Wales and England.

ACTION: KV to organise lobbying letter for all early years settings

11. Recruitment to Early Years (LAB/All)

Agenda item not discussed due to time constraints

ACTION: None

12. AOB

LAB confirmed this will be her last meeting due to a restructure within the Commissioning Team and expressed her thanks to the group for their hard work and dedication in helping to improve outcomes for early years children. EW is the Commissioning Manager for Early Years Entitlement and Wraparound Childcare so will take over EYRG leads along with Nicola Harris.

JB stated the Establishment Portal still has instances of the word 'free'. Can this please be updated?

KY raised the issue of charging and what can/cannot be charged and discussion took place. EC confirmed we are still awaiting clearer guidance from the DfE. All agreed that the topic of consumables and funded hours to be revisited for further discussion

ACTION: JH to investigate and organise removal of the word free on the Establishment Portal

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 20 March 2025 at 2pm.

Schools Forum (SF)
School Funding and SEN Working Group (SFWG)
MS TEAMS MEETING
14 January 2025
Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, local authority ((LA)), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), Liz Williams (HNB Sustainability Finance Lead); Ben Stevens (HNB Sustainability Strategic Lead) Kai Muxlow (Commissioning, LA) Lisa Percy (Chair of SF / Hardenhuish), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep), Graham Shore (Deputy Chair SF / Holy Trinity), John Read (PHF maintained rep, Lyneham Primary), Adam Smith (Chilmark, PHF representing maintained small schools.) Kathryn Davis (Director, Education & Skills); Lisa Fryer (HOS, SEN & Inclusion)

Apologies: Georgina Keily-Theobald (Downland) Nicola Whitcombe (Springfields Academy representing Special academies)

1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	MT welcomed the group to the virtual meeting.	
2.	Minutes	
	There were no outstanding actions.	
3.	Matters Arising	
	None.	
4.	DSG funding settlement 2025/26 – (GD)	
	Some 24-25 grants, namely the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers Pay Additional Grant (TPAG) - Teachers Pension Employers Contribution Grant (TPECG) and the - Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) have been rolled into the base funding and the annualised CSBG figure used for all mainstream schools.	
	For special schools, TPAG/TPECG/CSBC have been rolled up into one grant for 25-26 and not baselined. Special Schools will receive a new CSBG in the 25-26 year.	
	There are minimum increases into core school funding for 2526 and local authorities made representations to the DFE in a recent webinar. It is possible that there will be a funding review in the spring and we can hope for additional support at that time. No uplifted allocations for pupil premium grant for 25-26 have been announced but we're optimistic for uplift.	
	The allocation of £551 million for 25-26 includes a net reduction in mainstream pupils of 421.	
	The CSSB is the usual formula of £42.90 per pupil plus historic spend which reduces year on year by 20%.	
	High needs block for 25-26; there's a percentage protection on all factors to have increased by 7%.	

	<p>Within the Schools Block was setting the growth fund at £0.5 million and the NFF is fully affordable with a block transfer of 0.236% equating to £0.914m - why have we not got as much funding available as previous years? We believe it's a tightening within the formula we have reduced growth fund due to the dropping pupils numbers.</p> <p>For de-delegation, there is no change from the 2024-25 year apart from secondary schools are opting out of the delegation for the School Effectiveness Service (former LAMB Grant) as there are only four maintained secondaries remaining.</p> <p>LP thanks to Liz and Grant for all the work around the percentage transfer in light of the disappointing settlement. Some points of clarity on the figures in the report - GD to update. A query was raised around submitting the APT (budget information to the DfE) to the DfE prior to Schools Forum. GD confirmed there are inevitable queries from the DfE and once ironed out, they need to resubmit the APT. Should there be a change following cabinet for council then an adjustment can be resubmitted. GD - it's good to have an ongoing dialogue with the DfE.</p> <p>LP pointed out we really need to have a think about our future years and plan with this tightening of the funding and affordability of NFF and block transfers.</p> <p>KD we have been very clear in the cabinet paper about our recommendation but it is a political decision and will depend on cabinet MT ask the group if they felt that lobbying was appropriate.</p> <p>LP confirmed the f40 are lobbying but apparently not anticipating this making a difference.</p>	
5.	<p>Schools block report (GD)</p> <p>GD took the group through the report and assumptions with an affordable NFF, £0.5m Growth Fund and the transfer to high needs block of £0.914m. JR - why are pupil numbers falling when there is continued house building in Wiltshire - is there an appetite in the council to rationalise or close small schools? GD confirmed we haven't seen the impact of an increased birth rate that we anticipated post-Covid, and it could be that houses are not occupied by families. The low birth rate impact is seen across the whole country and many schools are closing, particularly in London boroughs.</p> <p>JR expressed concerns around addressing this.</p> <p>KD replied to JR that this question had been asked previously at Schools Forum and it is a priority to look after vulnerable schools. There are significant surplus pupil places and we have changed the focus group from 'small schools' to 'surplus places'. The conversation has been opened up with the DfE to include academies, diocese, MATs (CEOs) and head teachers. We can share the data that Clara Davies has produced with the regions group from the DfE who are keen to be involved. We need a round-table solution and it may feel slow but we are making progress and hope that later in the spring the group will meet. The local community can feel strongly around any school changes and it's sensitive politically locally and nationally we recognise that schools seem to be hearts of local communities. GD confirmed the last school that closed in Wiltshire was Shalbourne Primary that have had five pupils.</p> <p>GD – we can reuse and re-purpose empty school buildings for specialist provision or AP Lisa Fryer said it depends on location but if you do know of empty premises do let us know as we may not be aware.</p> <p>AS - Somerset are encouraging governing bodies of small schools to not always replace a head where numbers are falling - MT replied those conversations around federations and amalgamations were part of the small schools group and will definitely be part of the</p>	

	vulnerable schools round table group and I will pass this on to Kathryn Davies, who has had to leave the meeting early.	MT
6.	<p>High needs block report (LW)</p> <p>LW presented the proposed budget in line with the safety valve resubmitted plan. We are over budget by 35 million which is based on demand modelling and types of provision children and young people will be overlaid with targeted actions and impact from early support reductions include early support and that growth impact on the HCP's and step down from ISS attempting mid phase as well as at times of mid phase transfer and includes new places for specialist and the impact of this .</p> <p>Band values are still being worked up based on the consultation outcome and the proposal is still to take these to Cabinet in February.</p> <p>The affordable level of transfer from the schools block is £0.914m which is a shortfall compared to the figure shared with the DFE previously and currently this shortfall of £0.816m has been added to the budget as a “savings to find” target.</p> <p>JR - is there anything new in the savings to find line - LW more of the same, most authorities are doing the same things that we are. LF added there are high cost AP packages and we know that young people should not have AP as a destination. They should either return to mainstream or maybe better in specialist provision. The Northwood Centre should add opportunities.</p> <p>Special school MFG is set at 0% for 25/26. Inflation of 2.2% has been added on top ups so the current band values will be uplifted from April but this will need remodelling when we do the new top up rates.</p> <p>JR asked about when the overrides ends. LW confirmed there has been no announcement yet but this is a significant risk as the override is currently expected to end at the end of the 25/26 financial year. We are not sure how the safety valve agreement would impact on that as the council has an agreement in place to balance the high needs block over a number of years.</p> <p>NN - where do we stand compared to other local authorities? LW we are in a difficult place with our DSG deficit which is why we're in the safety valve programme but overall Wiltshire finances are in a better position than many local authorities.</p>	
7.	<p>CSSB (MT)</p> <p>MT presented the report on the CSSB – the 2425 increase in copyright licenses and 2425 and 2526 teachers pay grants have been added into the baseline and for the first time in a few years we have not been able to afford the transfer to high needs block due to the 20% historic reduction. SF members must vote on each line of the on going and historic commitments within this block.</p>	
8.	<p>EY (MT)</p> <p>MT presented her report the early years block has increased significantly due to the four year impact of the nine months to 2 years Grant and the two years universal Grant is still early days for these with regards to take up however the budget was reasonably straightforward to allocate this year and the Early Years reference group preference was to model a reduction in the baby room rates as they felt these were too high and we were therefore able to prioritise funding into three and four-year-old rate which is the largest area of expenditure. The LA decides the rates for the EY block following consultation with EYRG and SF.</p>	

9.	<p>AOB</p> <p>A request was made to share papers with the group earlier – MT apologised and said they really would try to get them quicker in future.</p>	All
10	<p><i>Date and Time of next Meeting</i></p> <p>SFWG 8.30am – 4 March 2025</p> <p>Schools Forum 1.30pm 13 March 2025</p> <p>This is planned as a teams meeting.</p>	

Glossary

RB – Resource Base

SV – Safety Valve

DfE – Dept for Education

LGA – Local Government Org

ISS – Independent Special Schools

EY – Early Years

LA – Local Authority

SoS – Secretary of State

EHCP Top-Up Review

Consultation Report

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1. Introduction

If a child or young person, between the ages of 0 to 25, has Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) they may require additional support. For most children and young people that support can be given in a mainstream classroom, with small changes. But in some cases, an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) may be needed, it sets out what support the child or young person needs to be able to access their education.

Additional costs to meet the needs of children with EHCPs are funded by local councils. Schools cover the first £6,000 of support from their own budgets then if a child needs more help, the council provides top-up funding to cover the extra costs. This ensures all necessary support is available to meet the child's needs.

Councils are responsible for deciding how this top-up funding is allocated, and in Wiltshire we use a "Banding" system which was introduced in 2016. This system has not kept pace with rising costs and evolving needs, leading to financial pressures on schools and support that can be inconsistent.

Our primary objectives in this project are to:

- align financial allocation to the relative need of students
- ensure equity and simplicity in funding
- support the financial stability of our SEND education sector

The consultation process was designed to gather input from key stakeholders, including parent carers, SENCOs, Headteachers, Schools Business Managers, and professionals in health and social care.

There was a seven-week consultation process, during which we conducted an online survey, and held three consultation events to facilitate more in-depth feedback.

The insights gathered from the consultation will inform the development of this new funding framework reflecting the assessed needs and financial realities of schools.

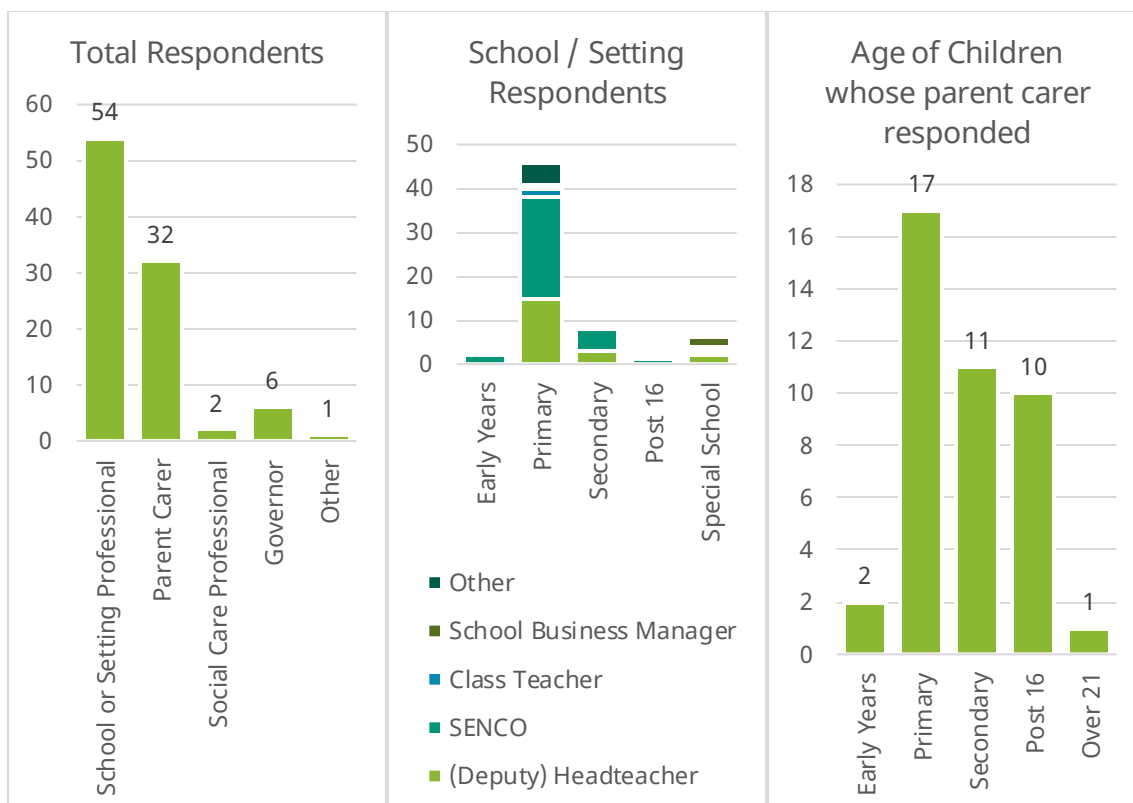
2. Methodology

We designed the consultation process to try and ensure we could get a diverse range of perspectives. The consultation process ran for seven weeks, opening on the 14th November 2024 and closing on the 5th January 2025.

We primarily collected feedback through an online survey, which included numerical responses and free text responses. This survey document (appendix 1) contained information about the current funding scheme as well as the proposed funding scheme. Participants were given the option to comment on the new descriptors of need, and could select the primary needs they were most interested in.

Over the 7 weeks, we had 88 individual participants. Participants could self-identify into multiple categories, and so the sub-groups do not total 88. However, they do allow us to understand the comments broken down by subgroup.

54 respondents indicated they were education professionals from a school or setting, 32 indicated they were parent carers, 6 said that they were school governors.



To support this consultation survey, we also held three online consultation sessions:

- **SENCO focussed session** – This webinar session sought views on how the current funding scheme helps support children and young people with SEND, and how the revised proposals can improve this. For this SENCO session the focus was on supporting SEND and time was spent on the descriptors of need. We used Mentimeter to collect and collate views, and these are included in the final analysis. There were 36 attendees to this session, and the recording was made available on RightChoice.
- **School Finance focussed session** – This webinar session sought views on the current funding scheme and on how the revised proposals could improve financial stability in the SEND system. We used Mentimeter to collect and collate views, and these are included in the final analysis. There were 41 attendees to this session, and the recording was made available on RightChoice.
- **Parent carer session** – We recognised that parent carers were likely to be less familiar with EHCP funding processes than our schools and so the focus of the parent carer workshop was on explaining the proposals and giving them an opportunity to ask questions, rather than asking questions of the parent carers. An average of 17 parent carers were on the webinar, and the recording on YouTube has been viewed around 45

times. The concerns and questions raised by parent carers have been included in the analysis.

3. Consultation Document Overview

The EHCP top-up funding consultation seeks views on a proposed model for EHCP funding. The consultation document is appendix 1.

This new model has 2 key elements:

1. Dividing the top-up funding. The proposed model splits the top-up funding into two bits. One part is based on the type of placement the child has. The second part is linked to the individual need of the child, considering the level of need and the support required for them to access education.
2. Nine-box grid model of need. The proposed model aims to assess the level of SEN need (Low, Medium, High) alongside the level of support required to access education (Low, Medium, High). This should give a fairer assessment of the funding required.

4. Consultation Events

SENCOs Event:

Date and Venue:

27th November, online webinar – recording available on RightChoice.

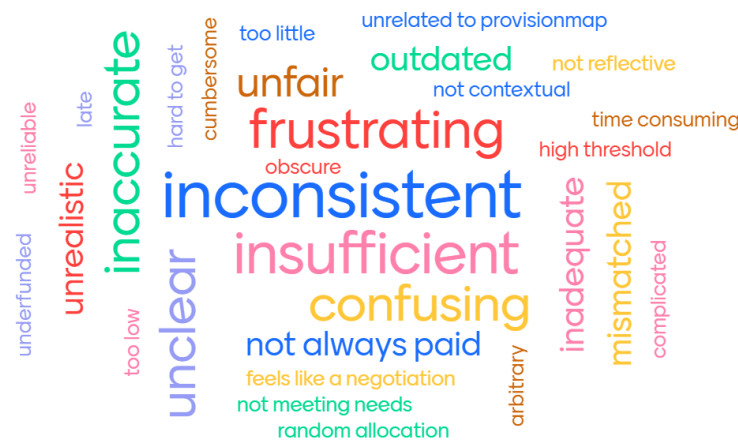
Attendance:

36 SENCOs. 78% of them were from primary schools, 17% were from secondary schools.

Key Discussions:

- The numerical questions were answered:
 - I understand the principles described in the proposal: 3.8 / 5
 - The model will help my school support CYP better: 3.3 / 5
 - It makes sense to assess need and impact on access: 4.3 / 5
 - I can see how this would apply in my school: 3.4 / 5
 - The format of the descriptors is clear: 4.2 / 5
 - The language used is clear: 3.3 / 5
 - The descriptors cover things I would find helpful: 3.9 / 5
 - I understand the need to improve EHCP top-ups: 4.9 / 5

- I agree with the proposal: 3.6 / 5
- I think the proposal will contribute to the aims: 3.6 / 5
- The proposal will improve things for CYP with SEND: 3.1 / 5
- Participants were asked how they would describe the current banding and funding scheme. The most common word was inconsistent, followed by insufficient, frustrating, confusing, inaccurate and unclear.



- Participants were asked what they liked about the proposals. Responses covered the advantages of assessing needs and impact, improvements to transparency, clarity and fairness.
- Participants were asked what could be improved about the proposals. Responses covered school funding challenges including concerns about notional SEN, the need to write a good Section F, and the need for the system to be nuanced enough.
- Participants were asked about the new approach to writing descriptors of need. Responses highlighted the need to be clear in the descriptions to avoid subjectivity, and to ensure it was explained what would happen where there are multiple needs.

Headteachers and School Business Managers Event:

Date and Venue:

5th December 2024, online webinar – recording available on RightChoice.

Attendance:

41 headteachers, deputy headteachers and school business managers. 65% were from primary schools, 20% were from secondary schools, 10% were from special schools, 5% were from post 16.

Key Discussions:

- The numerical questions were answered:
 - I understand the principles described in the proposal: 2.6 / 5
 - The model will help make funding more predictable: 2.9 / 5
 - The model will improve the stability of funding: 2.9 / 5
 - The model will help my school support CYP better: 2.8 / 5
 - It makes sense to assess need and impact on access: 4.2 / 5
 - The format of the descriptors is clear: 3.2 / 5
 - I can see how this would apply in my school: 3.1 / 5
 - I understand the need to improve EHCP top-ups: 4.6 / 5
 - I agree with the proposal: 3.0 / 5
 - I think the proposal will contribute to the aims: 3.0 / 5
 - The proposal will improve things for CYP with SEND: 3.0 / 5
- Participants were asked to describe the current banding and funding system. The most prominent responses were “insufficient”, “inadequate” and “unfair”.



- Participants were asked what they liked about the proposed funding scheme. Responses covered the needs led approach, the recognition of an outdated system and more bespoke approach.
- Participants were asked what concerns them about the proposed funding scheme. Responses covered concerns that the changes may not be sufficient, the lack of financial figures at this stage, and the need to recognise escalating costs in mainstream schools.
- Participants were asked to suggest what could be improved about the proposals. Provision of the financial figures and greater specificity around special school and AP funding were the key points.

Parent Carers Event:

Date and Venue:

5th December 2024, online webinar – [recording available here](#).

Attendance:

Average of 17 parent carers.

Key Discussions:

We talked to parent carers about the proposals and gave them the opportunity to ask questions or express views. The key points were:

- Concerns about what these changes could mean for children and young people on a day-to-day basis.
- Need for assurance that this is not about cost-cutting, it is about improving support.
- There were questions about the principle of banded funding and whether it was appropriate.
- There was a request to ensure that energy limiting disabilities, like M.E., are sufficiently covered in the descriptors.
- There were concerns expressed about assessing need and impact on access to education, with a view that the children with the highest need should just get the most money regardless.

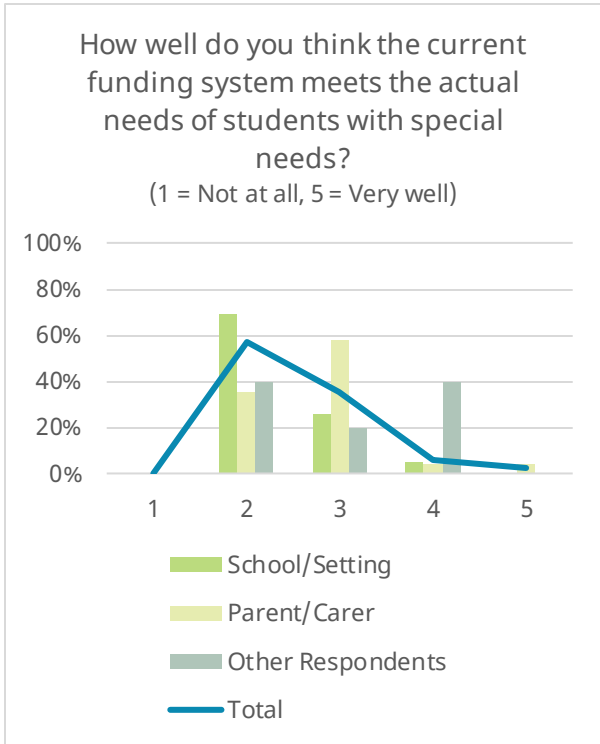
5. Survey Results

There were 88 responses from a range of perspectives.

Current scheme

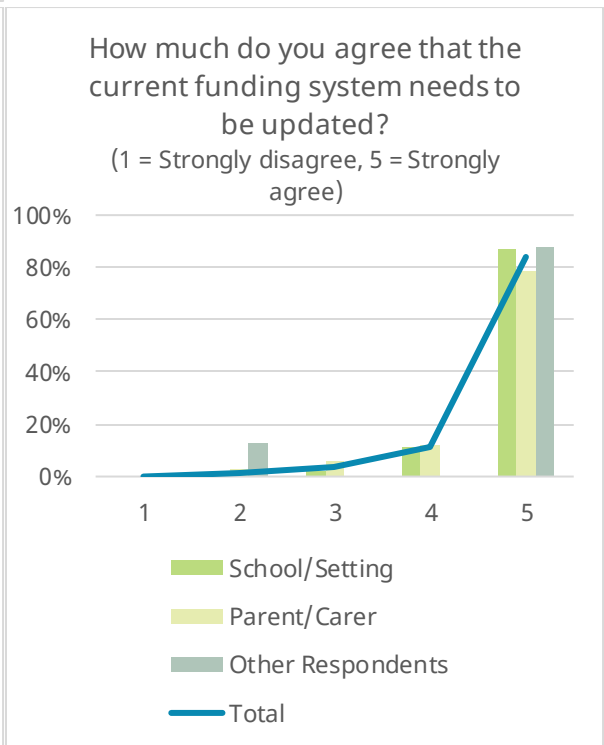
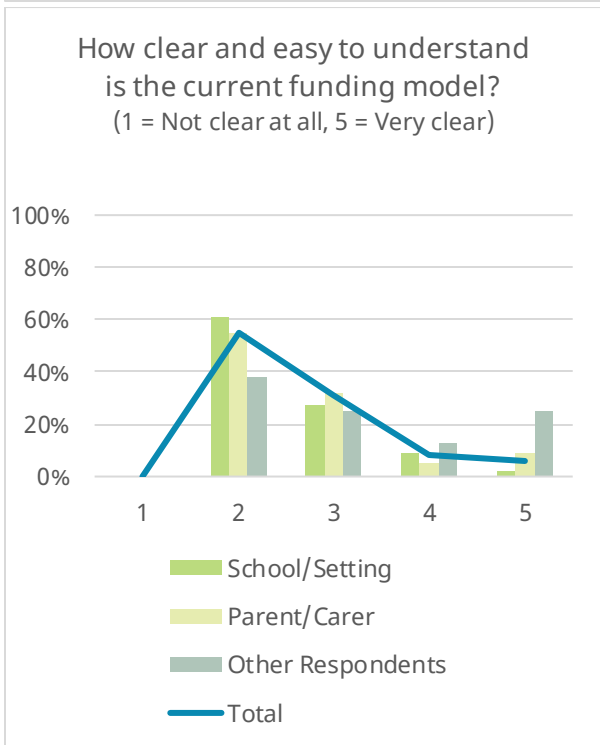
We asked respondents 3 numerical questions about the current funding scheme. Respondents did not feel that the current system adequately supports children and young people with SEND and felt that the system is opaque.

Broad consensus was shared across all subgroups without any significant differentiation. Schools and settings were marginally more critical of the current funding system than parent carers.



Respondents were given the opportunity to describe why they thought the SEND funding system needed to change. There was broad agreement over the issues:

- Concerns about funding adequacy – especially around resource bases and mainstream schools.
- Clarity for parents – especially around the pressures in schools.
- Fairness – ensuring the model meets need equitably.
- Needs to be child-centred
- Support for reducing the number of independent special school places.



There were concerns expressed that this review would be used to cut costs, instead of providing the best funding model possible.

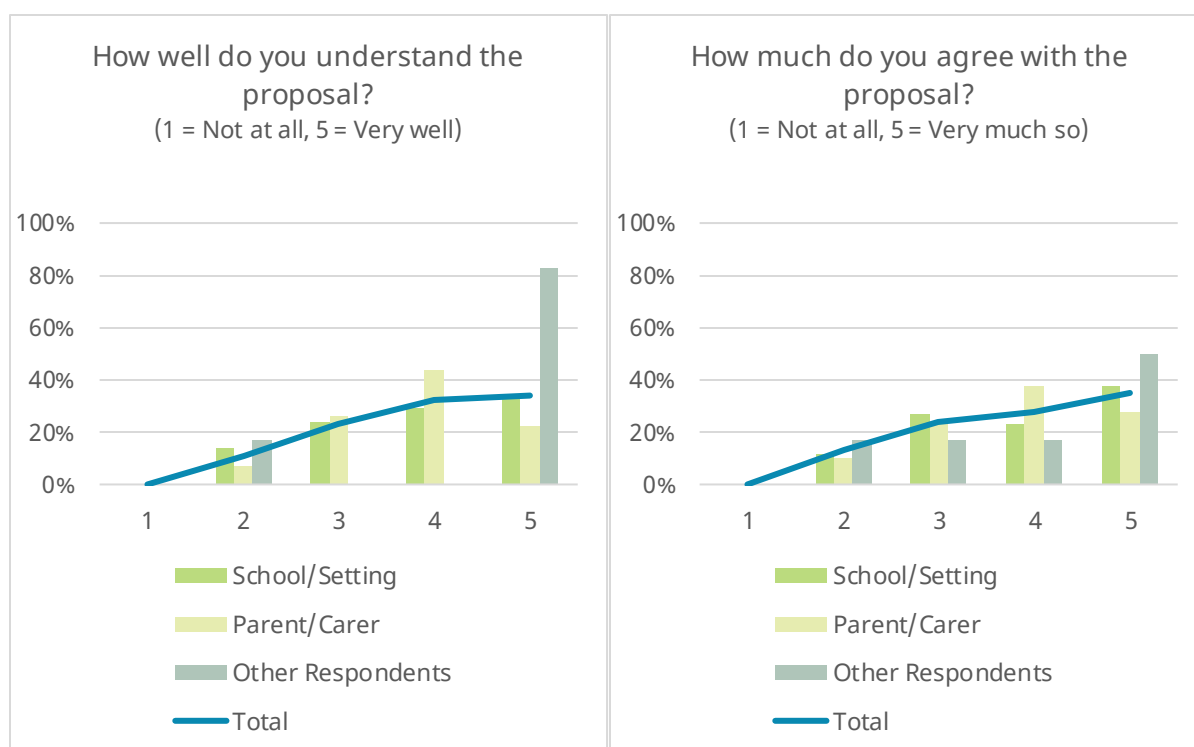
Additionally, respondents took the opportunity to raise concerns not directly in the scope of this project. These covered the school’s block transfer consultation, the need to overhaul the whole SEND system at a national level, and the inadequate notional SEN funding.

Proposed Scheme

Next, respondents were given information about the proposed scheme and asked to give an initial reaction to the proposals. While the response was muted, the reaction was much more positive than the views expressed about the current scheme. Broadly people felt that the scheme was clearly explained, two-thirds of respondents scoring it a 4 or 5 out of 5, and broadly people were in agreement with the proposal (63% scoring it 4 or 5 out of 5).

It is also worth noting that the Pearson correlation co-efficient between the two results was 0.75, indicating that the more a respondent understood the proposals, the more likely they were to indicate agreement with them.

There is clearly still work to be done to articulate the proposal to key stakeholders, and the implementation plan will need to be focussed on this.



Respondents were asked what they thought the impact would be of assessing both the level of need, and the impact on a child's access to education. In general respondents were enthusiastic about the idea, seeing it as more child-centred.

Positive responses suggested that the new approach:

- Could lead to better outcomes by ensuring the funding matches the educational needs more accurately.
- Could be fairer by providing a more holistic view.

- Could provide improved access by ensuring that children with complex needs are given a chance to access an education.

Respondents were then asked what could make the scheme better. School respondents, particularly, picked up the issue of notional SEN and the need to address that shortfall. There were also comments about the need to ensure the scheme is efficiently administered and meets needs.

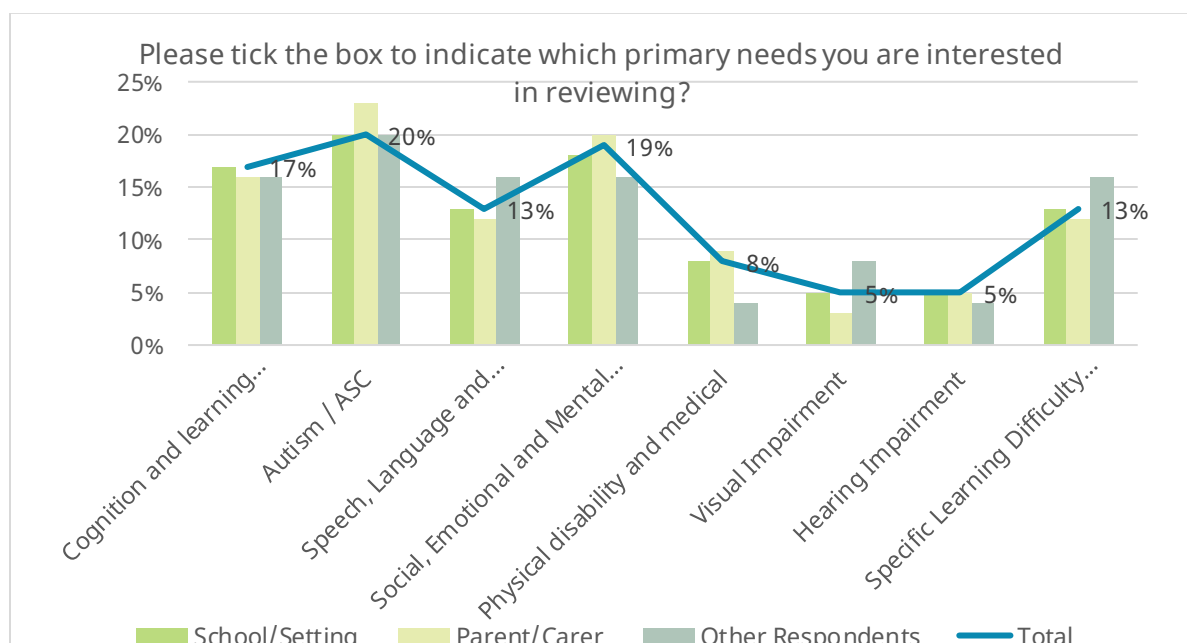
Schools were also keen to point out that, without specific financial figures to respond to, it was impossible to answer questions about whether the new scheme would be sufficient.

Aspects of the banded funding model were questioned, particularly the terms 'low, medium and high' which were not felt to be appropriate. Equally respondents were not sure that 3 bands would give the level of personalisation required.

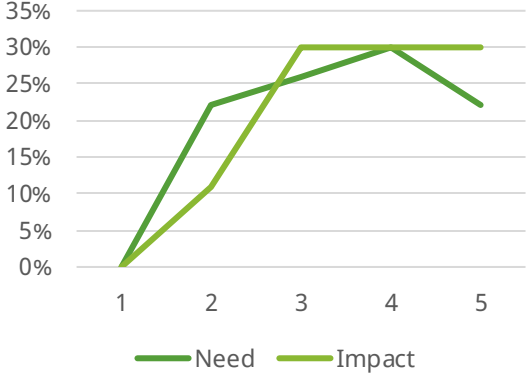
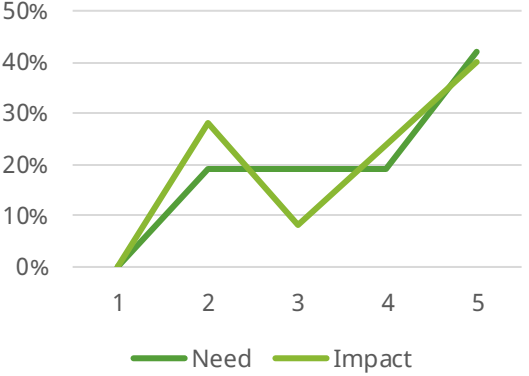
There were also questions about the suitability of any banded funding system and a suggestion that parent-carer should receive the money directly to commission support from schools.

SEND Descriptors

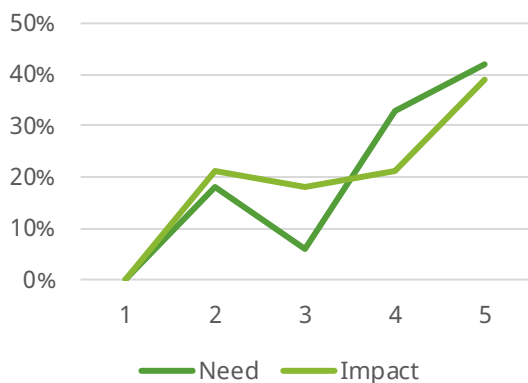
The next set of questions concerned the descriptors of need, categorised against primary needs. Respondents could answer as many or as few as they wanted to.



Overall, the descriptors were well received, over 50% of respondents scoring every one of them either a 4 or a 5. The descriptors were broken into two parts, the first describing the level of SEN 'need', and the second describing the 'impact' on access to education.

Cognition and Learning	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
 <p>The graph for 'Cognition and Learning' shows two lines: 'Need' (dark green) and 'Impact' (light green). The y-axis ranges from 0% to 35% in 5% increments. The x-axis shows levels 1 to 5. 'Need' starts at 0% at level 1, rises to 22% at level 2, 25% at level 3, peaks at 30% at level 4, and drops to 22% at level 5. 'Impact' starts at 0% at level 1, rises to 10% at level 2, 30% at level 3, stays at 30% at level 4, and drops to 22% at level 5.</p>	 <p>The graph for 'Speech, Language and Communication Needs' shows two lines: 'Need' (dark green) and 'Impact' (light green). The y-axis ranges from 0% to 50% in 10% increments. The x-axis shows levels 1 to 5. 'Need' starts at 0% at level 1, rises to 20% at level 2, stays at 20% at level 3, rises to 20% at level 4, and rises to 42% at level 5. 'Impact' starts at 0% at level 1, rises to 28% at level 2, drops to 8% at level 3, rises to 20% at level 4, and rises to 42% at level 5.</p>
<p>Positive: Many responses appreciate the clear and specific descriptions of needs and support required. This clarity helps stakeholders understand the expectations and align needs with the correct level of support.</p> <p>For Improvement: A common concern is that the descriptions may be too rigid and broad, making it difficult to fit the unique needs of individual children. There is a need for more flexibility to accommodate the diverse and specific needs of each child, ensuring that support can be personalized effectively.</p>	<p>Positive: Many responses appreciate the clear and well-structured descriptions of need. The use of bullet points and scaled responses makes it easier to understand and follow the criteria for different levels of need.</p> <p>For Improvement: A common concern is the need for more specific definitions and examples of what constitutes "moderate" and "severe" needs.</p>

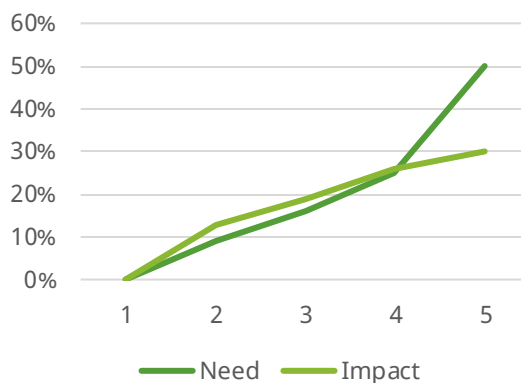
Social communication with differing behaviour



Positive: The descriptions of need are clear and detailed which was appreciated by respondents. Some noted that the examples provided for each level are helpful. This clarity aids in understanding the progression of needs and the corresponding support required.

For Improvement: A common concern is the need for more specific definitions and examples of terms like "moderate difficulties". There is also feedback on the need to consider the impact of the environment and the differences in how boys and girls may present their needs.

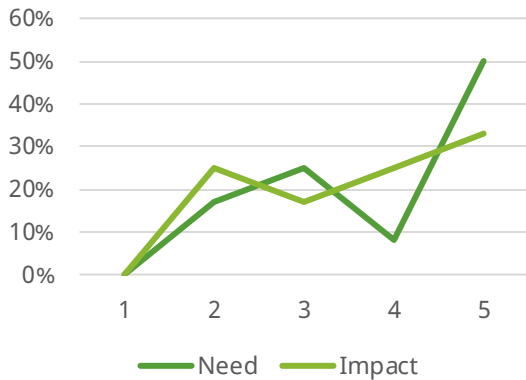
Social, Emotional and Mental Health



Positive: Many responses appreciate that the descriptions take into account various aspects of SEMH, not just the manifestation of behaviour, which provides a more holistic view of the child's needs. There is a strong emphasis on how SEMH impacts access to education, which is appreciated by many respondents.

For Improvement: A common concern is about the potential for inconsistent application of the criteria, particularly regarding the jump between medium and high levels of need. There is also feedback on the need to consider the impact of the environment and the differences in how boys and girls may present their needs. Some respondents feel that the descriptions downplay the issues and impact faced by children with SEMH, particularly those with high levels of need. There is also a call for more language and information around trauma and how school environments can trigger or exacerbate these issues.

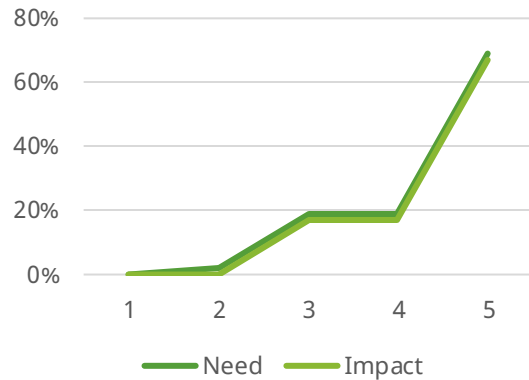
Physical disability and medical



Positive: The descriptions acknowledge the need for interventions beyond academic support, such as therapies, which is appreciated by many respondents. The descriptions cover a wide range of needs, including access to adapted enrichment activities and the physical environment, which helps in providing a holistic view of the child's requirements.

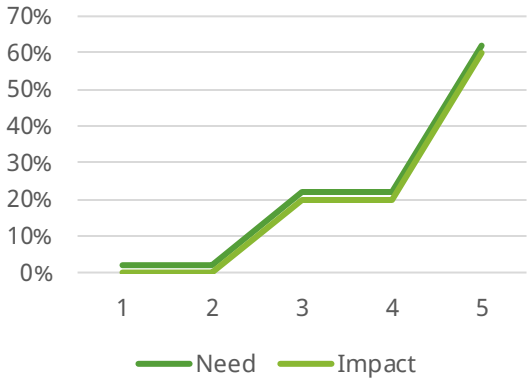
For Improvement: There is a call for more specific examples and definitions, particularly regarding the number of staff required and the impact of physical needs on education. There is also feedback on the need to consider the impact of chronic and complex medical conditions. There is also a call for more language and information around the impact of medical appointments and the need for adapted curricula and support following periods of absence.

Hearing impairment



Positive: The descriptions provide a clear scale of need from low to high making it easier to understand the progression of needs.

For Improvement: None

Visual impairment	Specific Learning Difficulty
 <p>Positive: The descriptions provide a clear scale of need from low to high, making it easier to understand the progression of needs. The descriptions are good for visual impairment, providing clear guidelines and considerations for this specific need.</p> <p>For Improvement: The descriptions should account for children with syndromic conditions who may have multiple needs, not just visual impairment. The descriptions should recognize that visual needs can fluctuate and progress over time, and assessments should consider the child's condition at its worst to plan effectively for the future.</p>	 <p>Positive: The descriptions are clear and thorough. Respondents appreciated that they recognised that most of these needs could be met through quality first teaching.</p> <p>For Improvement: Respondents did not feel that the impact of SpLD was sufficiently reflected in the descriptors and the grid needed a “high” box.</p>

6. Key Findings and Themes

The general sentiment of the feedback is mixed, with both supportive comments and significant concerns raised. While some respondents appreciate the proposed changes and see potential benefits, there is a sense that ‘the devil is in the detail’.

Clarity and Understanding:

- **Complexity and Simplicity:** Some feedback suggests that the proposed model is overly complicated, while others appreciate the thoroughness but still seek more straightforward explanations.

Equity and Fairness:

- **Fair Distribution of Funds:** Concerns were raised about ensuring a fair distribution of funds that addresses the needs of all students, including those in mainstream and special schools. There is a worry that the new model might not adequately reflect the varying levels of need.

Impact on Schools:

- **Budget and Staffing Concerns:** Feedback indicates worries about how the proposed changes might affect school budgets, staffing, and the ability to meet student needs. There is a fear that the new model might not provide sufficient funding to cover the actual costs of supporting students with special needs.
- **Resource Allocation:** Concerns about the allocation of resources and the potential for increased administrative burden on schools were also mentioned.

Training and Support:

- **Need for Additional Training:** There is a strong call for additional training and support for school staff to effectively implement the new funding model. Respondents emphasize the need for specialist training to meet the needs of children with complex needs and SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health).

Parental Involvement:

- **Importance of Parental Involvement:** The feedback highlights the importance of involving parents in the decision-making process and ensuring transparency in funding allocation. There is a call for better communication and collaboration between schools, parents, and the local authority.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Respondents emphasize the need for transparency in how funding is allocated and spent, with some suggesting that parents should have more control over a portion of the funding.

7. Recommendations

Improve Clarity and Understanding:

1. **Improve the descriptors:** Ensure that all terms used in the funding model are clearly defined.
2. **Simplify Explanations:** While maintaining thoroughness, aim to simplify the explanations of the funding model to make it more accessible to all stakeholders, including parents and school staff.

Ensure Equity and Fairness:

3. **Follow Legal Requirements:** Continue to ensure that the funding model complies with legal requirements and clearly includes input from professionals to maintain fairness and accuracy.
4. **Administrative Burden:** Ensure that the new processes associated with the funding model reduce the administrative burden on schools to allow them to focus on supporting students.

Provide Training and Support:

5. **Specialist Training:** Outside of the EHCP top-up project, offer additional specialist training for school staff to help them meet the needs of children with complex needs and SEMH.

Enhance Parental Involvement:

6. **Transparent Communication:** Ensure the roll-out plan includes a clear communication plan for parents to ensure they are fully informed about the funding allocation process and how decisions are made.

Address Specific Concerns:

7. **Add a Fourth Band:** Increase the number of bands from 3 to 4 to better reflect need in the system. This additional band will help to more accurately categorize and support children with varying levels of need.
8. **Clarify the Complexity Payment:** Ensure it is clear when a 'complexity payment' would be applied to children with a strong secondary need or other complication (e.g. PMLD). This ensures that children with multiple or complex needs receive appropriate funding and support.

Monitor and Evaluate:

9. **Regular Reviews:** Implement regular reviews of the funding model to ensure it is meeting its goals and making necessary adjustments based on feedback and outcomes.
10. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Continuously involve stakeholders, including parents, school staff, and professionals, in the evaluation process to gather diverse perspectives and insights.

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Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) top-up funding consultation

Introduction to EHCP funding

We want children and young people with Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND) to have the best possible start in life and access to the support they need.

If a child or young person, between the ages of 0 to 25, has Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) they may require additional support. For most children and young people that support can be given in a mainstream classroom, with small changes. But in some cases, an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) may be needed, it sets out what support the child or young person needs to be able to access their education.

Additional costs to meet the needs of children with EHCPs are funded by local councils. Schools cover the first £6,000 of support from their own budgets then if a child needs more help, the council provides top-up funding to cover the extra costs. This ensures all necessary support is available to meet the child's needs.

This top up funding is also called Element 3 funding, and in mainstream schools its sometimes called Named Pupil Allowance (NPA). Councils are responsible for deciding how this funding is distributed.

Glossary for quick reference:

- **Top-Up funding:** This is extra money provided by the local authority to a school when a child with an EHCP needs more support than the school needs to fund from its own budget.
- **Element 3 or NPA:** Another term for Top-Up Funding, which is the additional financial support given by the local authority for children with an EHCP.
- **SEND:** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) refers to children who need extra help because of learning difficulties or disabilities.

- **Special school:** A school specifically designed to support children with higher levels of SEND. These schools provide tailored education and resources to meet the unique needs of each student.
- **Resource base:** A specialised unit within a mainstream school that offers additional support for students with specific needs. It allows students to spend part of their time in regular classes and part in the resource base, receiving targeted help.
- **Mainstream school:** A regular school that educates children of all abilities. Mainstream schools aim to include students with SEND in regular classes, providing support as needed to help them succeed.

Why are we proposing to change it?

We need to change how we fund EHCPs to help schools support students with special needs better. The current system has been the same since 2016 and doesn't cover today's costs. Schools are having to ask for more money to cover their running costs, rather than the help that children and young people need.

By updating the funding, we can give schools the right amount of money based on what students actually need. This will help Wiltshire schools stay financially healthy and able to meet the needs of more students locally. This will be better for children and young people and reduce the need for expensive independent special school placements.

Our goal is to improve support for students and manage costs better.

1. **Match money to needs:** Give money based on what students actually need.
2. **Fair and simple funding:** Make sure all schools get fair and clear funding.
3. **Support special schools and resource bases:** Give enough money to keep them running well.

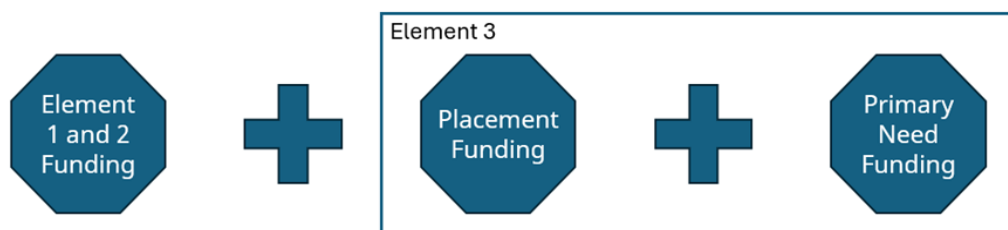
Questions

1. On a scale from 1-5, how well do you think the current funding system meets the actual needs of students with special needs? (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very well)
2. On a scale from 1-5, how clear and easy to understand is the current funding model? (1 = Not clear at all, 5 = Very clear)

3. On a scale from 1-5, how much do you agree that the current funding system needs to be updated? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)
4. Do you agree with the aims and reasons for changing how we fund EHCPs? (Text)

What are we proposing?

We are proposing to divide the “Element 3” Top-Up funding into two parts.



The first part of this funding will be based on where the child or young person goes to school or college.

This is to help support our schools because the Element 1 and 2 funding, which is decided by government, has not increased in line with the rising costs in schools.

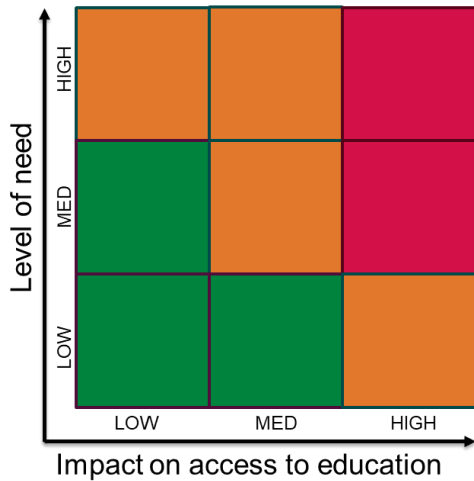
The other part of the Element 3 funding will be linked to the individual child or young person’s needs by understanding:

1. The level of need that should be supported
2. The support needed to enable their access to education

The current model applies a 0-4 band based solely on a description of need. The new model aims to demonstrate the funding required by including the level of need and how it affects access to education.

This helps show that some children or young people might have low needs but still need a lot of support to go to school. For example, a child with mild anxiety and depression who is avoiding school has low needs, from a clinical point of view, but really struggles to access education.

There might also be children with a high level of “clinical need” which is being managed well and does not impact them as much. For example, a child with severe hearing loss who is experienced in using a cochlear implant has high clinical needs but can access education more easily.



We have defined low, medium, and high categories for “need” and “impact”.

We want to make the categories shorter and clearer than the old ones, while still covering all needs. The aim is then to have three clear bands, shown in a nine-box grid.

Each “primary need” will have a different grid to show the support needed and to allow the Discussion and Decision (DaD) group to decide how much funding to allocate

to each EHCP.

Questions

1. On a scale from 1-5, how well do you understand the proposal? (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very well)
2. On a scale from 1-5, how much do you agree with the proposal? (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very well)
3. What do you think will be the effects of assessing both the level of need and access to education?
4. Do you think this funding model will help us meet our objectives? (match money to needs, fair and simple funding, support special schools and resource bases) (open text)
5. How could we make this funding model even more effective in meeting our objectives? (open text)

Descriptions of need

The next set of questions are about the descriptions of SEND needs. There are eight sets of descriptions, for different types of need. These questions get into the detail, and each ‘need’ could take 5-10 minutes.

You can answer questions about as many or as few as you want, or you can skip completely.

1. Please tick the boxes for the types of need that you want to review as part of this:

Multiple choice tick boxes (Cognition and learning, Hearing impairment, Visual Impairment, Speech Language and Communication Need, Physical Disability and Medical, Social Emotional and Mental Health, Specific Learning Difficulty)

For each one, the draft descriptors will appear on the screen and the questions below will be repeated.

2. On a scale from 1-5, how well do you think this describes need? (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very well)
3. On a scale from 1-5, how much do you feel this describes the impact on access to education? (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very well)
4. What do you like about the descriptors? (free text)
5. What could be improved about the descriptors (free text)

Questions

1. Do you have any final comments on the proposed EHCP funding model?

Demographic questions

Tell us whether you are a parent or if you work in SEND (Education Professional, Parent Carer, Healthcare Professional, Voluntary Sector, School/Setting Finance or Leadership, Other)

- a. What ages are your children?
- b. What kind of school/setting do you teach in? (for teachers)
2. Are you a Wiltshire resident?
3. What is the first part (e.g. SN3) of your postcode? (This information helps us

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