

Resource Base Banding Descriptors and Top Up Values for 2014-15

Purpose of report

1. To make proposals to Schools Forum on the implementation of new banding descriptors and associated top up bands for Resource Bases and Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) in 2014-15.

Background

2. Budgets for specialist provision in Wiltshire schools – Special Schools, Resource Bases and Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) had to be converted in to place values and top up values to meet the new funding regulations.
3. Budgets for resource bases had previously been calculated for individual types of resource base and at different points in time. When budgets for all types of provision were translated in to the place plus funding mechanism the differences between top up values for different types of need became clear (see Appendix 1)
4. In order to be compliant with school funding reform top up values based on previous budgets for different types of centre were agreed however Schools Forum requested that a review of top up values for resource bases be carried out for 2014-15.
5. A small working group comprising head teachers and centre managers from different types of resource base and officers from the SEN and Finance teams was established to consider the development of a new approach for the next financial year.

Main considerations for School Forum

6. The working group met twice during the summer term to develop proposals and then a meeting of all schools with resource bases was held in September to share the outcomes. The group focussed initially on the development of a single set of banding descriptors across all types of need to reflect the model already in operation across special schools in Wiltshire. A set of descriptors was agreed for 3 bands across all resource bases. The banding descriptors were considered against the descriptors for special schools so that the relationship between pupils in each type of provision could be demonstrated – see Appendix 2.
7. Once the banding descriptors had been developed work was then undertaken to ascribe financial values to those bands.
8. A number of principles were established in carrying out the financial modelling work:
 - a. That band values need to be sufficiently different between the bands to recognise the differential in needs.

- b. That detailed work on pupil:staffing ratios would not be carried out and so values would be based on the already agreed relativities between special school bands.
 - c. Fixed costs for resource bases had been calculated in recent years and so the “fixed rate” of £7,883 previously applied to resource base place values was added to the estimated staffing costs to arrive at a total cost per place for each band.
9. Throughout the process it had been noted that despite the differentials in top up values for different types of need there remained a parity between the rates for Band 4 in special schools, Band B for Complex Needs centres and the ELP 1 top up value. It was agreed that this parity should remain and therefore any subsequent review of ELP or special school top up values would need to take this in to account.
10. The proposed top up values linked to the revised banding descriptors for resource bases are shown in Appendix 3 to this report and the indicative impact on resource base budgets shown in Appendix 4. It is important to note that the impact is not based on a full banding moderation exercise but on assumed “translation” of existing bands to the new bands. For 2014-15 a banding moderation exercise will be carried out for all pupils in the top two bands once the descriptors have been agreed.
11. In general the impact is to reduce top up values for ASD and Hearing Impaired provision and increase top up values for Complex Needs and Speech, Language and Communications Needs centres. The most significant reduction is for Hearing Impaired centres and it was recognised that the previous top up values had included a requirement for HI resource bases to fund all equipment needs. This was not consistent with other types of provision and so it was recommended by the group that equipment costs for HI centres should be funded centrally rather than from the top ups.

Financial Implications

12. Based on the numbers of pupils currently in each resource base the estimated impact of the new top up values is an additional cost of £204,000. This will be revised following the banding moderation exercise carried out in November.
13. A minimum funding guarantee will remain in place for high needs top up rates in 2014-15 and so there may be a cost implication if the MFG applies to top up rates that are decreased – the calculation of the MFG has not yet been finalised.
14. There will be a future cost pressure related to the funding of equipment for pupils in HI centres which will now need to be met outside of the top up values. This has yet to be quantified.
15. A review of top up expenditure in 2013-14 indicates that there would be scope within the existing resource base budget to fund the increased top up values however this will need to be confirmed once the funding announcement is made in December. If funding is not available within the RB top up budget then options will need to be looked at across the high needs block.

Proposals

16. That Schools Forum agrees the revised Banding structure for Resource Base Provision with 3 bands for top ups. Top Up values will be finalised as part of the budget setting process.
17. That Schools Forum agree that the top up values for Resource Base bands 2 and 3 be applied to ELP2 and ELP1 bands respectively in order to maintain parity throughout the banding system.

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Appendix 2 – Proposed Banding “Spectrum” for Specialist Provision in Wiltshire Schools

Special Schools	Band 1+	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	
Resource Bases		Band 1		Band 2		Band 3	
ELP				ELP2		ELP1	
NPA				NPA – 20-30 hours		NPA 15-20 hours	