

SCHOOLS FORUM – Westminster City Council

REPORT BY TRI-BOROUGH ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR SEN & VULNERABLE CHILDREN

HIGH NEEDS – FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR EARLY YEARS 2015

This report;

* Proposes an approach to Short Term Contingency funding for Early Years settings, which builds on and develops the existing arrangements for contingency funding (see separate paper) – **for decision**

* Provides an update and proposes continuation of current arrangements for High Needs Top-Up Funding arrangements for children with a Statement of SEN/EHCP in the Early Years Sector over the financial year 2015/16 – **for decision**

* Provides an approach for Block Request (3 applications per academic year up to a maximum of 40k per request) for Early Years Sector over the financial year 2015/2016– **for decision**

Introduction

1. The Children & Families Act was enacted from 1st September 2014. The change in legislation brings with it duties on the Local Authority to:
 - 1.2. publish a Local Offer of provision for children and young people 0-25 with special educational needs and consult with parents and young people on the Local Authority
 - 1.3. Transfer children with a statement of SEN to an Education, Health and Care (Sept 2014-April 2018)
 - 1.4. Undertake new single education, health and care assessment for children with a learning difficulty
 - 1.5. Offer a personal budget to those young people issued with an EHC Plan
2. The Local Authority has high aspirations for children with SEN and as such the strategic approach to High Needs Funding that has been adopted to date has been based on the premise that there is a continuum of local provision for local children funded from the High Needs Block, which, in the long term, supports young people with SEN in gaining employment and becoming independent in or near their local community.
3. Westminster City Council is keen to support early years settings, schools and FE providers in having a well resourced effective and efficient Local Offer to meet children's additional learning needs.

How does an early years setting access short term contingency funding?

4. From September 2014, to support early years settings in providing responsive intervention for children with a continuum of needs a contingency fund of £200K per annum was established for Early Years (pro rata – Sept-March @ 7/12ths).
5. The purpose of the contingency fund is to support the achievement of specific outcomes through targeted intervention for children with SEN without a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan in early years settings.
6. Short term contingency funding can be accessed through a request made to the SEN Service. The format for the request has been revised on the basis of feedback from the Early Years High Needs Block Reference Group (see attached).
7. For children in early years settings the short term contingency funding request is for the full cost of intervention as there is no notional SEN budget allocation for early years providers.
8. On the basis of these changes it is proposed that this approach continue during 2015/16 with regular feedback and the opportunity of the HNB Reference Group to review decisions. **Does Schools Forum agree this proposal?**

Early Years Local Offer Proposal - HNB Contingency Block Request

9. To support the provision of a Local Offer of EY settings with expertise in meeting the needs of children with a range of SEN and by way of provision of early intervention it is proposed that up to three settings in Westminster City Council can request a block contingency allocation of £40K per annum for a three year period to provide for a number of children with SEN without the need for EHC assessment.
10. This proposal is supported by members of the High Needs Block Reference Group. It has been identified by the Early Years Sector that upfront and early intervention achieves better outcomes for children. Many settings have a range of children with differing profiles that require specific interventions to meet their individual needs. This is of a significant burden financially to this sector as they have to provide the provision that the identified children require and do not receive a notional SEN budget.
11. It is anticipated that the individual needs would not warrant or meet the threshold for high needs EHC Plan funding and/or would meet the threshold, however, need to be supported through a programme of intervention from the date of admission and before an EHC assessment has been started and or an EHC Plan issued.
12. To enable Early Years settings to meet this demand. It is proposed that an Early Years Setting would be able to put forward applications to show the range of the needs of their children within a cohort or whole setting detailing the provision to meet their needs collectively and individually. The full set of criteria for this funding will be

developed by the Local Authority and representatives from the EY HNB Reference Group.

13. This would be through an application process – a maximum of 3 applications per three year period, allocation of funding is for academic years with a maximum of 40k per application - to meet the specific cluster of needs identified by the setting and to provide an enhanced resource for the Borough. It would be expected that applications provide detail as to how the funding would be used and the targeted approach to meet the short term and long term outcomes for the individual children.
14. In providing this funding, it would enable the settings to provide early years intervention, meeting the children's needs locally and enabling them to make progress; supporting the retention of skilled staff within WCC.
15. A long term objective would be that fewer children would be requiring interventions to identify their needs prior to primary school entrance. As their needs would have already been identified in the early year settings and the provision required to meet those needs implemented, monitored and evaluated.

Does schools forum agree with the proposal to allocate EY HNB block contingency of up to £40K for three EY settings?

Early Years High Needs Block Reference Group

16. The Early Years High Needs Reference Group has been established as a Tri-borough group with four substantive meetings a year to review the distribution of the EY HNB Contingency. Schools Forum to note the active engagement of representatives from the full range of EY settings. The Local Authority is grateful for the support of head teachers.