

Item 6**TITLE OF REPORT: Special Schools Funding Review**

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Schools Forum the work that the Special Schools Funding Review (SSFR) group have been undertaking this financial year.

Background

2. The group comprises of all special head teachers and heads of school with input and technical support from a range of officers from Corporate Finance, Education Gateshead, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Service and other officers as required.
3. The current special school's formula is based on work that was undertaken approximately ten years ago and had a phased introduction over 3 years from 2010/11. The pupil based elements were based on the relative needs of children over 5 specialisms with 4 levels of need in each specialism. The group developed a range of descriptors that described the "typical" pupil in each speciality for each level of need.
4. The original formula has been tweaked several times to conform with changes in funding regulations and school developments and pressures.
5. Due to the continued financial pressure schools are under, the change over time of Gateshead's special schools and the needs of the children placed in them, increasing pressure on special school places and the cost of these and as a response to the LA's focus to try to reduce out of borough (OOB) places the group agreed to undertake a full review of the special school's formula.
6. The review began with the main focus being the pupil needs driven element of the formula. The group looked for and reviewed other local authorities (LA) resource led funding models and descriptors.
7. Following this background work the group decided to reduce the number of specialisms from 5 to 3 deleting the categories of Sensory Physical and Medical and Communication and Interaction leaving Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Cognition and Learning (C & L) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as it was the view of the group that all special schools pupils could be accommodated within these specialisms. The group also agreed increase the banding levels from 4 to 5 to try to accommodate the more extreme individuals and those that are possibly currently placed OOB.
8. The group then worked on reviewing the banding descriptors which detail the needs and behaviours of pupils within each specialism and each banding. These were reviewed and agreed by the group.

9. The next task was to review the staffing requirements of each banding level to determine the levels of relative needs of each pupil. This information is then used to calculate the relative needs of each child in comparison to other children in other bands. Several meetings have been held to determine this and modelling is still on going.
10. It was hoped that the new special schools model would be in place for 2018/19, but due to the complexity of the process and the amount of work undertaken this will not be possible.
11. The group have agreed as an interim step to the new formula to use the current weighting, but reduce the number of specialisms from 5 to 3.
12. Special school senior leaders have also agreed to spend a day in each other's schools gain a better understanding of each other's schools and the needs of the children in each school.

Proposal

13. It is proposed that Schools forum notes the contents of the report and the work that the SSFR group have undertaken in reviewing the special schools funding formula, and approves the reduction of specialisms from 5 to 3 with the elimination of Sensory Physical and Medical and Communication and Interaction leaving Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Cognition and Learning (C & L) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Recommendations

14. That Schools Forum approves the elimination of Sensory Physical and Medical and Communication, and notes the work undertaken by the group.

For the following reasons: -

- To enable Special School budgets to be calculated
- To keep Schools Forum informed of the ongoing work of the group

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