

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 27th September 2011

REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY AND FUNDING FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLES' FUNDING AGENCY (YPLA) TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS/LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND DISABILITIES POST 16

Executive Summary

Responsibility for funding young people with special educational needs/learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (SEN/LLDD), over the age of 16 years and up the age of 25 years, transfers to local authorities from April 2013. The arrangements are part of two national consultations about the reform of school funding and the SEN framework.

Background

For learners with SEN and LLDD post 16 there are currently three budget pots and all with different rules and regulations.

- The SEN block grant to local authorities from the YPLA for SEN in schools.

The SEN Block grant for 2011-12 is £1,434,857. The allocation is in respect of costs of SEN provision in special schools, school 6th forms and some independent school providers. However funding is related to changes in the 16 and 17 year old population not changes in SEN proxy data. There is budget pressure in this area, costs significantly exceed resources.

- The YPLA budget for additional learning supporting (ALS) in the further education sector or sixth forms that is paid on historical numbers.

Currently £600,000 is spent by the YPLA at the local college and sixth form college for ALS. Last year Wirral fortunately received extra discretionary funding, for one year only, of just under £400,000 to support local provision. Budgetary pressure is likely to remain in this area.

- The YPLA budget for Independent Specialist Provision (ISP) to which local authorities apply, such provision is not usually the home borough and so is often residential.

Historically Wirral has seen relatively larger numbers of young people attend ISPs compared to neighbouring authorities and consequently draw on larger

sums of money from the YPLA than other authorities. Eighteen students left their ISP placements in July 2010 and were replaced by six learners. In July 2011, 11 learners left IPS placements and will be replaced by 3. The authority has worked hard to develop local approaches and reduce the numbers attending ISPs. The pressure will remain to do so as a fixed budget becomes a reality in April 2013. The notional budget is currently £1.7million and the current spend is at this limit. In the previous year the overall allocation was over £1.7 million.

From the consultations that are underway the government intends to develop new funding approaches and apply the same principles to pre and post 16 populations and across both schools and further education sector providers.

The YPLA is already working towards providing local authorities with a single budget for high needs learners up to the age of 25 years. This would give local authorities discretion and allow them to build local provision which would give choice to young people and their parents and allow students to live at home, participating in their community and work placements where they wish to do so. Also, the YPLA have been paying social and health care costs while the young person is at an ISP and is exploring options with relevant departments to ensure that a consistent approach is taken.

Recommendation(s)

The Forum is asked to note:

- the government's intention to create a single funding framework and budget for the local authority for post 16 learners up to the age of 25 with SEN/LLDD;
- the budgetary pressures that are likely to remain.

David Armstrong
Interim Director of Children's Services