

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013**

### **REPORT OF THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

#### **REFORM OF FUNDING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)**

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is to update the Forum on progress with the changes made by the national reform of SEN funding. These changes affect the way statements of individual pupil's SEN are funded in mainstream schools and academies, how specialist SEN and alternative provision are funded (often called bases/units), and how special schools are funded. The financial year 2013-14 is a transitional year, the changes come into full effect in 2014-15.

#### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Previous reports to Forum have detailed the wide scope and large scale of the changes to SEN funding, the full extent and impact of which should not be underestimated. There will be some redistribution of funding across the SEN landscape, the changes are designed to make the system open and transparent, more market orientated and more responsive to parental choice. Headteachers of many special schools have concerns about the impact of these national changes because of the uncertainty that may surround their budget planning.
- 1.2 A set of slides from the Department for Education is attached in appendix one that summarise the new system of funding for SEN.

#### **2. PROGRESS**

- 2.1 On Wirral we have held a detailed consultation with all schools and academies during the Summer Term 2012, and Forum made a number of decisions in September 2012. A principal intent behind some of the decisions was to preserve stability and minimise funding disruption for the transitional year.
- 2.2 Since September 2012:-
  - i We have worked with Education Funding Agency (EFA) to provide data and information about pupil numbers in specialist provision. This is because the EFA will provide funds direct to specialist provision (£10k per place in specialist SEN provision, and £8K per place in alternative provision). These monies will no longer come through Wirral's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
  - ii We have worked to identify the elements in current budgets that will form the High Needs Block in Wirral's DSG (approximately £32m).

- iii Budgets have been drafted for special schools for 2013-14 and discussed with headteachers.
- iv Budgets have been drafted for resourced and alternative provision for 2013-14, and are due to be discussed with headteachers before the end of January 2013.
- v. Following consultation Forum agreed that Wirral's five units of support will be increased in value from £5,665 to £6,000. It will also result in a corresponding reduction in the value if support is in excess of £6,000. An amount of money has been identified to be delegated to schools' notional SEN budgets.
- vi Finance and SEN colleagues have been working together, across the nine authorities that form Merseyside Learn Together Partnership, sharing information, ideas and proposals, to develop and align processes and practice.
- vii A seconded headteacher with experience of primary and special schools has started work to develop a local system of banded 'top-up' funding.
- viii A SEN Steering Group the Forum agreed in September 2012 to set up to guide developments has met, and will be meeting monthly over the next two terms to steer work on the development of Wirral's SEN finance.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Forum is asked to note the contents of this report

**Julia Hassall, Acting Director of Children's Services**