

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM - 3rd July 2013

Funding High Needs Students aged 16-24 Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update about funding high needs (SEN) students aged 16 -25 years. This follows a report to Forum in September 2012. That report drew attention to the proposed changes and also pointed out budgetary pressures.

1. Background

The Government announced new arrangements for funding educational provision for pupils and students with high needs. These arrangements were introduced in April 2013.

The details of this new approach were set out in the *School funding reform: Next steps towards a fairer system*, published on 26 March 2012 and in *School funding reform: Arrangements for 2013-14*, published on 27 June 2012. Each Local Authority will become responsible for managing the funding for education support for high needs students aged 0-25.

The Government has defined high needs students as pupils and students who need educational provision that costs more in total, including the basic provision given to all pupils and students, than **approximately** £10,000 per year. This threshold defines the level of need that the Government expects to be met through mainstream funding and those for whom additional funding is required. Pupils and students with high needs include those aged from birth to 19 with high-level special educational needs (SEN) and those aged 16-25 with high-level learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) including those aged 19-25 who are subject to a learning difficulty assessment (LDA).

The Local Authority has been working closely with both local and national providers to forecast learner numbers for 2013/14. The Local Authority submitted initial forecast information to the Education Funding Agency in September 2012 and the overall HNS numbers came to 323. A final return was due on the 22nd February 2013 and the forecast then came to 331.

2. Budgetary Position

It is a complex change to move to a single common system from one under which high needs students in different settings have been funded and recorded via three separate mechanisms. As you will appreciate the money that will be distributed is finite and aims at least to maintain the same level of resources for the next financial year (2013-14) as was available for High Needs young people resident in our area last year

(2012-13). However, it continues to be a matter for us to manage any pressure across the whole of our budgets, using all the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations at our disposal.

Based on the learner number data provided, the Local Authority has estimated the forecast spend for 2013/14 and this has then been compared to the allocation the Local Authority received from the Dedicated Schools grant. The table below illustrates this.

Post 16 Top Ups for Further Education Colleges and Independent Service providers

	FE and ISP Budget	Aug 2013 – March 2014 (8 months – Estimate)	Aug 2013 – July 2014 (12 months – Estimate)	August – March Shortfall	For this
Wirral LA	£552,400	£579,064	£ 868,595	£26,664	

year, the Local Authority will have to supplement this allocation from other areas by £26,664, full year costs are likely to be higher.

As budgets will be very tight for the foreseeable future the Local Authority will be informing the Education Funding Agency about these pressures.

3. Managing the Post 16 allocation – 2013/14

Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral have been working in partnership on a process for allocating funding in 2013/14. This includes new contract documents/arrangements for Post 16 providers and an allocation based on a maximum contract value (MCV). The MCV is based on the discussions we have had with Further Education/Independent Specialist providers. The Learn Together Partnership has also been informed about this. Providers will be asked to submit learner information to the Local Authority at the beginning of each term, this information will then be assessed by LA Officers and providers will then be paid before the end of term.

4. Future Proposals

For 2014/15 the Local Authority will be consulting with providers on an SEN handbook. This document ensures Wirral has:

- procedures to assess the needs of all students with high needs from 0-25 for the academic year 2014-15;
- guidance for all parties to understand the process for assessing and funding high needs, as guidance it is not designed to be prescriptive in every individual case.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 - That the report be noted.

Recommendation 2 – The Forum to agree that further dialogue is required with the Education Funding Agency to highlight that the budget is not sustainable beyond 2013/14.