

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 13th November 2013

Funding High Needs Students in 2014-15

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update about arrangements for funding high needs (SEN) students for 5-25 year olds in 2014-15. This follows a report to Forum in July 2013. That report drew attention to the proposed changes to funding arrangements in 2013/14 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 has become responsible for managing the funding for education support for high needs students aged 0-25.

The consultation on proposals for Top Up Funding for High Needs Pupils and Students, reported elsewhere on this agenda, is part of these overall changes.

2. 2014/15 – Forecast Pupil and Student Numbers

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) published information, in June and July 2013, on the 2014/15 high needs funding arrangements. The Local Authority subsequently received further correspondence which requires each LA to complete templates detailing the number of High Needs Students forecasted for 2014/15.

The Local Authority has been asked to return these templates by the **23 December**, which includes any submission to support an increase in numbers, or to seek to retain funding where there is a drop in numbers. It is worth noting that the total national high needs budget for the financial year 2014/15 has yet to be agreed but we have been informed that resources will be tight and any increases in some allocations will need to be balanced by reductions in others.

To support this process, at the end of November, the Local Authority will receive data showing actual numbers by institution for the academic year 2012/13. However, the EFA does not have a comprehensive set of data from previous years to base allocations solely on historic data and as such this will be a second transitional year for the new funding system. They, therefore, need to ask Local Authorities for two key pieces of information – the numbers of places by institution commissioned for the academic year 2013 to 2014 and place numbers by institution for 2014 to 2015.

3. Key Areas for consideration

In 2013/14, the Local Authority was asked to forecast High Needs Students (HNS) and worked closely with both local and national institutions to forecast learner numbers for 2013/14. The final return came to 1,589 places of which 325 were post 16 (included in the table below).

2013/14 – Pre 16 Numbers	2013/14 – Post 16 Numbers	Total HNS Numbers
1264	325 allocated (331 actual)	1589

The LA will be speaking to Schools and Colleges over the next month to determine the forecast for 2014/15. It is worth noting that Post 16 numbers at both FE colleges may increase due to the ongoing improvements in the quality of Post 16 provision and additional capital funding to improve the infrastructure/capacity in both local FE Colleges.

4. Budget 2013/14

The current budget funding high needs pupils and students is set out below:

High Needs Places	12,613,000
High Needs Top Ups	11,826,600
Hospital School	1,334,000
Statements	4,915,400
Total	30,689,000

5. Future Proposals

For the academic year 2015/16 the EFA intend to move to a system which bases place-funding for institutions on the most recent actual numbers available from census and ILR data. There will still be scope on an exceptional basis to adjust numbers in respect of evidenced demographic or structural changes, driven by local authorities' commissioning plans, or the opening or closure of institutions. For that year the EFA will therefore no longer require local authorities to submit a template containing place numbers broken down at institution level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be noted.
2. The Forum to note if LA analysis indicates numbers are increasing then the LA will submit a bid to the Education Funding Agency for additional funding.