

MEETING:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	28 SEPTEMBER 2009
TITLE OF REPORT:	SEN/BANDED FUNDING – REVIEW WORKING GROUP REPORT
PORTFOLIO AREA:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To consider the findings of the SEN/Banded Funding Working Group and refer the findings to the Herefordshire Schools Forum for consideration.

Recommendation

THAT subject to any comments the Committee may wish to make the recommendations of the Working Group, set out in paragraphs 12-14, be referred to the Herefordshire Schools Forum for consideration as part of their further review of the delegation of SEN/Banded Funding.

Reasons for Recommendation

- 1 To approve the recommendations of the SEN/Banded Funding Working Group for referral to the Herefordshire Schools Forum for consideration as part of their further review of delegated funding.

Introduction and Background

- 2 All mainstream schools receive delegated SEN Bands 1 & 2 funding into their budgets. The amount for each setting is determined through a formula. The Funding For Inclusion (FFI) Group, a sub group of the Herefordshire Schools Forum, considered a number of formula options by which SEN funding could be allocated and consulted schools upon two options throughout September – November 2008. The results were considered by the Herefordshire Schools Forum who subsequently advised the local authority.
- 3 At its meeting on 8 December 2008 the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee considered information concerning the provision of additional funding to mainstream schools for the purpose of making appropriate Special Educational Need (SEN) arrangements under the 2001 SEN Code of Practice.

- 4 The Committee debated the report and a number of concerns were raised. These were principally around the use of the Free School Meal index as a basis for allocating levels 1 & 2 banded funding to schools. The Committee resolved that the report be noted and a SEN/Banded Funding Working Group comprised of Councillors: WLS Bowen (Chairman) WU Atfield; G Lucas; AM Toon; SJ Robertson and JD Woodward, be formed to examine the range of delegated funding options and how the SEN/Banded Funding system was meeting the needs of children and schools.

Considerations

- 5 Prior to the meeting of the Working Group members were issued with a substantial pack of background information principally containing: the report and minutes of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee; a report by the Assistant Director Improvement and Inclusion setting out the position; and reports and minutes of Herefordshire Schools Forum.
- 6 A meeting of the Working Group was held on 18 August 2009, which was also attended by Kathy Roberts (Assistant Director of Improvement and Inclusion), Ed Edwards (Manager of Additional Needs: SEN and Disability) and Malcolm Green (Finance Manager).
- 7 The Working Group received an overview by Kathy Roberts. This included a summary of the work undertaken by the Funding For Inclusion Group, focusing on the options consultation with schools and an analysis of the responses, and the subsequent deliberations by the Herefordshire Schools Forum, which considered the outcomes and advised the local authority.
- 8 The Working Group questioned the officers based on the following themes: the Banded Funding Process; the Statutory Assessment Process; SEN Funding in Schools, and the Formula Considerations.
- 9 In relation to the use of the Free School Meal (FSM) index to allocate funding for bands 1 & 2, the Working Group were informed that a number of delegation models had been considered, including the possible introduction of moderation factors. However, it had been considered that even with the moderation factors included the alternatives to FSM provided little additional benefit and were likely to complicate the procedure for schools. While not perfect it was considered that a formula based on the FSM index, which was updated annually, would provide the most up to date index and be most closely correlated with the actual banded funding in 2007-8. It had also been recognised by the Herefordshire Schools Forum that a few schools would be adversely affected and therefore to limit the financial loss to those schools protection arrangements had been put in place.
- 10 Herefordshire Schools Forum also approved a review of the use of Free School Meals as the index in the funding formula during 2009/10. This review will be undertaken during late autumn 2009/early spring 2010. The Working Group were also informed that as part of that review, work is already underway to explore the use of a basket of indicators in the hope of obtaining a closer fit to the SEN numbers in schools and provide a more consistent funding method to assist schools with longer term budget planning.

The Findings

- 11 Based on the information before them the Working Group were satisfied that due consideration had been given by the Funding For Inclusion Group and the Herefordshire Schools Forum to the options available by which Band 1 & 2 funding could be delegated to schools.
- 12 The Working Group noted that should a child need more support/funding than Band 4 funding provided to enable the child to stay at their chosen mainstream school, a process was already in place whereby, following an assessment, 'top-up' funding could be allocated to the school to meet the child's needs. The Working Group RECOMMENDED that the Band 4 'top-up' mechanism needed to be set out in the guidance documentation.
- 13 Noting an apparent low response by schools to the consultation undertaken by the FFI Group, the Working Group RECOMMENDED that when future consultation on the issue is undertaken that schools receive adequate education and clarification to ensure that schools fully engage in the consultation.
- 14 Appreciating that the Herefordshire Schools Forum intend to review the use of the FSM indicator, the Working Group supported the exploration of alternative delegation formula and therefore: RECOMMENDED that the proposed work on exploring further the FSM index or developing a 'basket of indexes' be undertaken by the Herefordshire Schools Forum.
- 15 The Working Group requested that the Assistant Director, Improvement and Inclusion refer the above findings to the Herefordshire Schools Forum for consideration as part of their further review of the delegation of SEN/Banded funding.
- 16 The Working Group requested that it be kept informed of the outcome of the review by the Herefordshire Schools Forum on this subject.

Community Impact

- 17 None as a result of this report.

Financial Implications

- 18 None as a result of this report

Legal Implications

- 19 None as a result of this report. .

Risk Management

- 20 None as a result of this report.

Consultees

- 21 The Working Group interviewed: Kathy Roberts (Assistant Director of Improvement and Inclusion), Ed Edwards (Manager of Additional Needs: SEN and Disability) and Malcolm Green (Finance Manager).

Appendices

22 None. .

Background Papers

- None identified.