

Minimum Funding Guarantee for Special Settings 2024/25

Date: 12th March 2024

Report of: Head of Finance, Children and Families

Report to: Chief Officer Resources and Strategy

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

Approval is required to set a minimum funding guarantee (MFG) of 0.5% for SEND settings to be funded from the DSG High Needs block funding. To meet this MFG the Funding for Inclusion (FFI) unit rate for these settings will be increased by £12 (from £732 to £744 per unit). Those settings currently paid a set top up rate will have their rate increased to reflect a 0.5% MFG.

Recommendations

- a) The Chief Officer Resources and Strategy is asked to approve the proposed increase in the Funding for Inclusion rates of £12 from £732 to £744 per unit with effect from April 2024 and to increase the set top up rate by 0.5% for those settings in receipt of set top ups.

What is this report about?

A brief statement of the reasons for the decision

(Include any significant financial, procurement, legal or equalities implications, having consulted with Finance, PACS, Legal, HR and Equality colleagues as appropriate)

The High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools grant provides funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This includes places and top-up funding in special schools, resourced provision in mainstream schools and alternative provision; top-up funding for early years, primary, secondary, post-16 and out of authority provision; central SEND support and hospital & home education.

The high needs operational guide states that the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) must be at least 0% and that local authorities should consider setting the MFG within a range of 0% and 0.5%. The authority is proposing that in line with the MFG for mainstream schools, this is set at 0.5%. In order to meet this level of increase, it is proposed that the Funding for Inclusion unit rate for these settings be increased by £12 (from £732 to £744 per unit). Settings currently paid a set top up rate will have their rate increased to reflect a 0.5% MFG.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 1 The proposed increase will ensure that special schools will receive the same MFG as mainstream schools and ensure that they receive a minimum funding increase on 0.5%.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 2 By ensuring that special schools receive additional funding in 2024/25 this will continue to fund and support the increasing demand and pressures within high needs provision

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 3 The high needs budget 2024/25 including the proposed increase to FFI rates were included in a report which was presented to Schools Forum in February 2024.

What are the resource implications?

- 4 The proposed 0.5% MFG and increase to FFI unit rates and set top up rates recognises the increased financial pressures across special schools for 2024/25. The total cost is estimated to be £375k and is funded from the approved High Needs Block budget.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 5 If high needs funding is not allocated in a fair and transparent way, then this may impact on the ability of special schools to continue to provide sufficient and quality special needs support.

What are the legal implications?

- 6 DfE regulations set out that the recommendations within this report are decisions for the Council to take, rather than Schools Forum.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 7 The other option considered was to not increase the MFG by 0.5% and retain the 2023/24 FFI unit rates. The preferred option to set an MFG of 0.5% and increase the FFI unit rates by £12 ensures that special schools receive the equivalent MFG to mainstream schools.

How will success be measured?

- 8 All special schools will receive an MFG of 0.5%.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 9 FFI unit rates will be increased from 1st April 2024.

Appendices

-

Background papers