
York Schools Forum

10th May 2023

Report of the Assistant Director, Education and Skills

Schools Forum Task and Finish Group: SEND Banding

Summary

- 1 This paper provides the members of Schools Forum with an update on the work of the SEND Banding task and finish group and shares recommendations from the group.

Background

2. At the meeting of Schools Forum on 8th February 2023 it was agreed that the Assistant Director, Education and Skills should convene a task and finish group to focus on a review of the current use of the High Needs DSG through a review of the current approach to SEND banding in York.
3. The task and finish group has established a pattern of meetings and has representatives from the local authority SEN and inclusion services, from special schools and from mainstream primary and secondary schools.
- 4 The purpose of the task and finish group has been to review the current approach to SEND banding in York and produce recommendations for Schools Forum about any changes that can be recommended to improve the use of banding to support the graduated response

This has included:

- Reviewing current use of element 3 funding;
 - Considering the use of banding to support inclusion in mainstream;
 - How can allocation and use of top up funding be made more consistent and transparent:
 - Place and top up funding in specialist schools and settings.
5. The review of SEND banding is being done in the context of the Safety Valve delivery plan and the publication of the Department for Education's SEND and AP improvement plan which was published on 2nd March 2023. A priority in the SEND and AP improvement plan is financial sustainability with an outcome that *'Local systems deploy their resources effectively such that spending shifts towards early intervention and away from costly specialist provision, where this is not required'*.
 6. The SEND and AP improvement plan identifies the need to have a funding system which is *'one that is consistent but is also flexible, transparent and simple. The introduction of a national bands and tariffs funding system that sets expectations for the cost and delivery of provision, with appropriate flexibility, is dependent on other policy proposals, particularly the development of National Standards, so this will be*

developed alongside them. It will be designed to appropriately reflect the needs of children and young people, including the most complex needs, and to meet the cost of the provision that they need. It will give providers clarity on how much funding they should expect to receive in delivering support or a service and enable commissioners to determine the funding required.'

7. The majority of local authorities in England do have an SEN banding system. In York the current system of SEND banding was developed and published in 2018.
8. All systems of banding should be kept under review and updated to reflect the latest evidence of best practice and this has been a consideration of the members of the task and finish group. As part of their work examples of banding and resource allocation in other local authorities has been looked at.
9. It was felt that the current banding framework is useful for SENCOs as it provides a framework to discuss needs and provision with families, however there was an acknowledgement that the current banding system is complex as it has a number of sub bands which can be difficult to apply and create inconsistencies e.g. examples of children identified with the same levels of need being placed in different sub- bands (low, mid, high). There was also an acknowledgement that York's current banding system for special schools is complex.
10. Members of the group looked at different approaches being used in other local authorities. There was general agreement that any review of banding needs to begin in an agreement of what should be ordinarily available in mainstream for children identified as having special educational needs.
11. Any review of banding should also seek to improve the clarity, transparency and consistency of the decision- making processes. It was felt that a review of banding should:
 - Incorporate the Early Years and Post 16 sectors and have a simpler model for the specialist providers which works alongside a change to place funding
 - Ensure that when the local authority decides not to assess or to issue an education, health and care plan, that the education setting and family are provided with a clear description of the provision required to meet need with evidence referenced against the banding to show how needs can be at SEN Support
 - Revised banding should be launched with an associated quality assurance process to ensure that funding is being used appropriately

Recommendations from the task and finish group

12. Following a consideration of models being used in other local authorities there was support for piloting the use of a costed provision map model (currently being used in East Cheshire (see annex A). To test this approach thoroughly against current banding it is suggested that a same scale pilot is run and evaluated in the autumn term of 2023. In parallel the current York banding documents will be reviewed and simplified to improve identification and assessment of SEND.
13. The review of banding must be underpinned by an agreement of what ordinarily available provision looks like in York. The York's current published guidance (annex B)

needs to be re-written and it is proposed that a task and finish group works on this in May and June so that new guidance can be written and published for the start of the new school year in September 2023.

14. In order to support inclusion in mainstream it is proposed that a School Inclusion Fund of £200K is put in place using the High Needs DSG, this would allow resources to be targeted for children and young people identified as SEN support but who's needs could be met without an education, health and care plan. It is also proposed that an SEN capital fund to support inclusion in mainstream is also put in place. The value of this would be £300K (ringfenced within the current basic need funding). This would allow schools to apply for funding to support internal adaptations e.g. to meet sensory needs.
15. It is recommended that new guidance about the local authority advisory panels for statutory assessment and resource allocation is published and shared with stakeholders to increase transparency.
16. It is recommended that the local authority works with the specialist settings to review the current special school banding framework and to establish a clear place-based framework. This will allow the specialist settings to have greater clarity around budget management.

Recommendations

17. The members of Schools Forum are asked to comment on and support the recommendations from the task and finish group.

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