



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

West Northamptonshire Council: SEND Funding Recommendations

1. Background

In September 2022, WNC established a SEND Funding Steering Group which included representatives from educational settings (schools, colleges, units and early years), Special Educational Needs Coordinators and representatives from parent/carer forum groups. Additional educational sub-groups were also set up to facilitate more detailed reviews for the early years, mainstream schools, and further education sectors.

The key objective of the project team was to create a funding framework whereby the local authority can allocate the High Needs Block of the dedicated schools grant funding to schools, colleges, SEND units and early years settings in a fairer, more consistent, timely and transparent way based on the needs of children and young people (CYP).

This framework also needs to support a sustainable funding system that can ensure, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is not overspent over the medium-term financial plan and is able to provide efficient and accurate financial information for multiple people and purposes.

An additional objective of the project team is the requirement to align SEND funding criteria to the SEND Ranges / Graduated Approach which was launched in November 2022. This relates to Targeted SEND Funding (Non-EHC Funding).

In September 2023 we undertook some engagement with education providers and service users to help identify opportunities to develop the service and improve communication and training. A fundamental finding was that WNC area stakeholders believe that SEND funding levels should be based on the CYP's level of need.

WNC have completed robust financial modelling based on CYP with SEND and the current level of funding. WNC recognises the financial pressure on schools and education providers in funding for children with SEND across West Northamptonshire. The project partners have reviewed models of funding rates for all settings and have considered what is required for managing pressures on the High Needs Block, along with rates for increases in overall funding.

The project partners agree:

- That cutting the levels of funding at a time when demand for SEND provision is growing, will have a detrimental effect on children and young people,
- That by investing in local schools and education providers directly, it will bring consistency to funding levels based on need,

- That support will be through the local SEND Partnership, which will improve outcomes for children with SEND, especially within their local communities
- And that overall, this will contribute to the balancing of the DSG over the medium-term.

Based on the feedback from the public consultation, the feedback from partners and the evaluation of the current funding methodologies, WNC recommend the implementation of the funding systems proposed here, which ensures alignment between the level of need with a rate of funding, the higher the need, the higher the funding rate.

2. SEND Funding Systems

EHC Plan Funding system recommendation

For CYP in early years settings, and mainstream schools, and SEND units at mainstream schools, WNC recommends the implementation of the Education Banding Tool for Top Up Payments. This tool has been used to assess the needs levels of CYP in Special Schools within West Northamptonshire since 2017. This tool is also known as the Resource Allocation System (RAS).

This will be implemented for all new EHC Plans and existing EHC Plans for CYP in early years settings, and mainstream schools, and SEND units at mainstream schools from 1 September 2024

Recommendations for CYP in further education settings will be the subject of a future recommendation from WNC.

The Education Banding Tool is specifically designed as a fair and consistent method to estimate the level of additional funding a child or young person needs to meet their SEND needs and support their outcomes. Imosphere are the owner of this propriety system and work closely as a partner with WNC.

A Needs Profile Form is completed for all CYP based on the content of the approved EHC Plan. This form is completed by EHC Caseworkers and moderated by EHC Officers. Completion of this form then generates a RAS Banding Level. The tool delivers 10 different funding bands which encompass CYP with a wide range of needs including those who may need to attend specialist settings. The indicative band assigned to an individual CYP is based on the assessed needs of that CYP. This ensures that funding level is evidence based and consistent across all CYP.

The recommended levels of funding for EHC Plans are included later in this consultation document.

Non-EHC Plan / Targeted SEND Funding System Recommendations

From 2014 to March 2021 funding for CYP without EHC Plans was available via the High Needs Funding Panel Process for CYP in Early Years and School age settings via Northamptonshire County Council. From April 2021 a similar panel process and administration has been implemented by WNC for both age groups.

Historically this type of funding was referred to as High Needs Funding, however from mid-2023 this has now been changed to Targeted SEND Funding. This name was co-produced with members of the SEND Funding Project Steering Group.

For early years CYP, the provision of this type of funding by the local authority (LA) is statutory. The local authority has to establish SEND inclusion funds (SENIFs) for all children with SEN that are in nursery provision and taking up funded entitlement hours. These funds are intended to support LA to work with providers to address the needs of individual children with SEN. The level of funding provided is however at the discretion of the LA. For 2024/2025 financial year, the level of funding has already been included within a separate Early Years consultation and is not therefore part of this consultation process.

For school age CYP, SEND funding for pupils without an EHCP is non-statutory and is provided at the discretion of WNC. The objective of this funding is to provide early intervention for CYP with SEND to help them achieve agreed outcomes over a short period of time. By providing this early intervention funding WNC have been able to reduce the number of CYP who go on and apply for a Request for Statutory Assessment (RSA) which is evidence of the effectiveness and importance of this funding to support our children and young people achieve their potential.

WNC believe that there is a direct link between the provision of early intervention Targeted SEND Funding and the prevention of the needs of some CYP escalating.

WNC recommend the continuation of the Targeted SEND Funding panels as the system to review applications from education providers on behalf of CYP at their settings. Updated application forms will be implemented from 1 September 2024.

The recommended levels of funding for Targeted SEND Funding are included later in this consultation document.

3. SEND Funding Levels Recommendations

EHC Plan Funding Level Recommendations

To support the implementation of the Educational Banding Tool in early years, mainstream schools and SEND units at mainstream schools, additional funding of approximately £2.5m in the first year is forecast. This includes payment protection to the education settings for 3 years.

All special arrangements related to EHCPs will no longer be supported, but existing arrangements will be supported by payment protection (Some exceptions will still exist)

It is estimated that the payback to WNC will be 3.3 years and is based on the savings secured by not placing CYP in independent settings.

Current funding levels based on the hours of support needed:

Level	Current Top Up Funding
1	£1,500
2	£3,000
3	£4,500

Level	Current Top Up Funding
4	£6,000

In addition, a number of special funding arrangements are currently in place.

Recommended funding levels from 1 September 2024:

Band Level	Top Up Funding September 2024
1	£0
2	£4,420
3	£4,951
4	£5,429
5	£5,981
6	£9,464
7	£12,542
8	£16,152
9	£20,081
10	£23,904

From 1 September 2024, the WNC objective is to have no special arrangements, unless they are within the scope of the exceptions list.

Please note: pupils funded on targeted SEND may be on more or less funding if moving to an EHCP.

Payment protection: this is recommended at the rate of 75%, 50% and 25% in years 1, 2 and 3 of the new system. this payment protection would apply to EHC Plan payments, Targeted SEND Funding payments and EHC Plan Special Arrangements combined at a school budget level per financial year April to March. Protections apply to pupils in schools as of 1st September 2024, if a pupil changes school the protection ends.

Non-EHC Plan Funding / Targeted SEND Funding Recommendations

To support the alignment of funding with the SEND Ranges and the strengthening of the short-term support for school age CYP without EHCPs, additional funding of £0.33m in the first year is agreed by WNC.

For early years CYP, an increase of 25% in the hourly rate from £8.00 per £10.00 per hour was recommended and approved within the January 2024 early years sector consultation. This will apply to all new and existing applications from 1 April 2024.

For school age CYP, the current funding levels are from £500 to £6,000 maximum. Funding increases in increments of £500. These rates had also not been increased for 6 years and again they are considered to be too low to cover schools' costs of supporting their pupils.

From 1 September 2024, for new applications only WNC recommend:

- linking the funding rates to the SEND ranges
- schools need to demonstrate that the first £6,000 of Notional SEND expenditure has been paid by the school
- the holistic schools Notional SEND budget has been fully used

WNC SEND Ranges recommended funding levels:

Ranges Level	Funding
1	No additional funding is available
2	No additional funding is available
3	No additional funding is available
4a	Up to £4,000 is available
4b	Up to £6,000 is available
5	Up to £8,000 is available
6	Up to £8,000 is available
7	Up to £8,000 is available

Targeted SEND Funding by its nature is targeted to support the achievement of specific outcomes over a short period of time. Since September 2023 this time limit has been set at 2 years.

Analysis by WNC highlighted that many education providers were applying for Targeted SEND Funding via Funding Continuation Forms for several years instead of completing a Request for Statutory Assessment for an EHC Plan. Extended support of this type is not the reason why this type of funding was allocated.

On-going support would be funded through schools Notional SEND budgets or an EHCP if appropriate.

There may be exceptional cases where funding given is different than bands shown above, based on individual circumstances. See exceptions lists.

4. SEND Ranges Engagement

Early years settings, mainstream schools, units at mainstream schools, parents and carers of CYP with SEND, plus young people with SEND are asked to note that this additional funding is conditional on the SEND Ranges being implemented across early years settings, mainstream schools and units at mainstream schools.

5. Holistic Funding Recommendations Mitigation

Unless Government significantly increase the high needs block funding in future grant allocations, the pressure on WNC to reduce high needs education spending will remain. Unfortunately, this means that if targets are not met with regard to reducing the number of CYP in independent settings then other budgetary measures will need to be considered. These considerations include, but are not limited to, reduction of funding rates below inflationary increases in rates or the reduction or removal of non-statutory funding (for example targeted SEND Funding for school age children).

6. Consultation with the early years, mainstream schools, and SEND units at mainstream schools' sectors

In line with statutory duties, and the SEND Code of Practice, local authorities must ensure that changes to SEND Provision and high needs funding arrangements are in consultation with early years setting and schools which will be affected.

The project working group has formed a significant part of this consultation with representatives from early years settings, mainstream schools and further education colleges.

Consultation with WNC Schools Forum took place on 14 February 2024 which gave the detailed rates of top up funding to be implemented from September 2024.

WNC also seek the feedback to the funding methodologies and funding level recommendations via this consultation.

7. Consultation with the parents and carers of CYP with SEND plus young people with SEND

To fulfil its obligations within the Children and Families act 2014, WNC also seek the feedback to the funding methodologies and funding level recommendations from parents and carers of CYP with SEND and young people with SEND via this consultation.