

Banded Funding for EHCP and SEN

Report title	Banded Funding summary
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Board/ meeting to submit to	Appendix as part of cabinet paper
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1. Banded Funding

- 1.1. There are two key issues that we are looking to address, the first is the availability of funding at the right time to support early intervention and the second is the complexity of the existing funding system. At present, the only route to access funding for children and young people in schools, beyond the notional SEN funding available, is via the statutory Education Health and Care Plan. This is a complex, legal process which may result in delays in accessing the additional and individual support. We want to ensure that schools and settings are able to access funding at the right time without the need to request a statutory plan where it isn't necessary.
- 1.2. The funding system is currently complex and is often linked to the type of setting that the child or young person attends, rather than the needs that have been identified. This is exemplified by the number of different processes and resource allocation systems that are in place to identify funding for EHCPs. We want to streamline processes and have one system to allocate additional funding based on the needs of the child or young person and not the setting that they attend.
- 1.3. The objectives of the project are as follows:
 - To design and deliver a banded funding system that facilitates support to be provided to children at the earliest opportunity by Early Years' settings, and schools.
 - To align the banding, the work streams and relevant systems and services to the Graduated Pathway.
- 1.4. Expected outcomes:
 - A funding model that enables the Local Authority to allocate additional funding to educational settings in a timely way, based on individual needs of children/young people with both non-statutory plans and EHCPs
 - A funding model that allocates non-statutory funding to support additional education needs for individual children/young people where appropriate.
 - Reduction in number of EHC Plans issued in Gloucestershire by increasing the availability of non-statutory funding allocated using the funding model.
 - Reduction in the current overspend of high needs funding by at least 5% based on 2019/20 spend.

2. How Banded Funding will work

- 2.1. The banding system will allow funding to be made available as soon as a school identifies a child who needs extra support, beyond that which they would be expected to fund from Notional SEN funding.
- 2.2. The banding system will work in parallel to the graduated pathway, meaning those who have a higher level of need, will be able to access more funding for support. Those children who have additional needs but who don't need an EHCP to meet those needs, will also be able to access funding for support.
- 2.3. The funding system will be more child focused. It is more flexible and offers more options for support to be tailored to a child's needs.
- 2.4. All education settings will adhere to the graduated pathway and the banding system. This means all children receive the right funding no matter where they are learning.
- 2.5. Banding and associated funding will be directly linked to the needs of the child as described in their EHCP or My Plan Plus and the provision detailed to meet those needs and allow that child to make progress.

3. Engagement

- 3.1. Engagement with stakeholders has been undertaken through a range of focus groups and a public engagement exercise on the GCC website.
- 3.2. We led a numbers of focus groups with key stakeholders across the county, these include:
 - Education Psychologists
 - Advisory Teachers
 - SEND Case worker
 - Parent Carers Forum
 - Head teachers groups
 - School SEND Coordinators
 - Speech & Language Therapists
 - Early Help Partnership Managers
 - Early Years Leads
 - Education Inclusion Leads
 - Virtual School
- 3.3. A [Banded Funding Engagement Pack 2020](#) was developed and sent out to all groups and services. This provided an opportunity for broader engagement with stakeholders and the public. The engagement exercise ran from the 1st October 2020 to 15th January 2021. As part of the Engagement Pack an opportunity for digital feedback was offered.

3.4. The banding descriptors are included in the pack will continue to evolve and develop implement the new model. We are working closely with the local authority’s Advisory Teaching Service, Educational Psychology Service, the Speech and Language Service and Health colleagues and SEN practitioners across the county. This will ensure that all professionals who contribute to assessments used for EHCPs are familiar with the model and have contributed to its design.

4. Summary of engagement

4.1. Overall the engagement exercise produced a positive response to the proposed model and the rationale that supports it.

4.2. There were 21 responses to the survey. These have been summarised below.

- 88% of respondents agree or strongly agree with proposals for banding
- 96% of respondents agree or strongly agree the rationale for the banding is clear

4.3. The table below identifies concerns that were received and our response to them. Overall they were not concerned about the rationale or the model itself, but the implementation and refinement of banding descriptors.

Comment	Our response/feedback
As far as it relates to mainstream schools, it is fairly clear. For special schools, it is very unclear.	We have worked hard with S<, ATS & EPS and amended descriptors to better reflect needs and provision in specialist settings. We are working with the special school heads association to work through how their current banding system can move seamlessly to the new banding model.
I can understand the rationale but feel that the bands are very similar and that it would be very difficult to get any funding. Continuous use of an appropriately qualified professional could be tricky when we get very little support from the ATS as it is. The EP service is also difficult to access. Who would these professionals be?	There is ongoing work to refine the banding descriptors and offer clear progression between bandings. We have removed use of appropriately qualified professional and named them by profession.

4.4. Overall there was a very positive response to the clarity of benefits with 96% of respondents agreed the objectives and benefits outlined in the briefing pack are clear and the proposed approach will achieve these.

4.5. We also asked respondents to identify risks or challenges to the proposed approach so that we could ensure these are addressed in the implementation. There was a 95% response rate which is summarised with our responses below.

Comment	Our response/feedback
funding not allocated; restrictions for allocating EHCP resources will see a reduction in EHCP funding for pupils and have a detrimental effect for them	The model is not intended to lower thresholds or funding levels. There is ongoing work with key stakeholders, including schools, to ensure that funding levels are clearly mapped to the banding descriptors.
4 respondents raised concerns about over-inflating needs to get higher banding	This will be addressed through the associated processes to support the banding. It is critical that specificity and quality of plans is of the highest level and is supported by key professionals.
Risk of massive budget inflation. Unrealistic expectations of families and professionals. Creation of an army of bureaucrats. Pupils being kept in mainstream for too long before transferring to special schools	This model is not lowering thresholds and we are working with finance colleagues to ensure that the banding system stays within budget. Good communication with all stakeholders including families and professionals is a critical part of the process and this will not be adversely affected by this model. Processes will be kept as straightforward as possible and will not enforce bureaucracy and delays. If a child or young person needs access to specialist provision and an EHCP schools and family ability to make an application for this is unaffected.
There is also a lot of room for interpretation within the objectives that may cause the need for further examples/explanation considering the different needs and understanding of all the stakeholders.	We are clear that a clear communication and training plan for the different stakeholders is required to ensure effective implementation of the model for September 2021.
Concerns re processes to access non-statutory funding and level of funding attached. May be easier to apply for EHCP. No reduction in EHCPs	Ongoing work with Graduated Pathway work stream to address this and ensure that this is one process and not separate processes.
Challenge to upskill to holistic plans rather than just education. Lack of knowledge from schools as to how to use funding differently.	This is a wider development issue which being addressed by other work streams as part of the implementation.

4.6. Finally we asked respondents whether they agree that the proposed approach outlines a clear and natural progression of need in bandings, to which 96% responded positively.

4.7. We also received some general feedback from respondents which has been incorporated into the final draft descriptors.

5. Final descriptors

5.1. The final descriptors are:



C&I Banding
Document Draft V2.ppt



C&L Banding
Document Draft V2.ppt



S&P Banding
Document Draft V1.ppt



SEMH Banding
Document Draft V2.ppt

6. Equality Impact Assessment



EIA-Banded
Funding-Dec20.pdf

7. Benefits to children and families

7.1. We are delighted by the positive response to the proposed model and the confidence that it can deliver the following benefits:

- Additional funding can be accessed at the earliest opportunity to meet high level, short term needs through a non-statutory process
- The banding system will be consistent across all settings with the exception of independent special schools and colleges. This means that no matter where a child learns, they will get the support they need.
- The opportunity for settings to offer more flexible, creative support options in a timely manner. Support can be tailored to an individual child's needs or to a group of children with similar needs. Wider benefits:

8. Review period

8.1. Banded Funding will be reviewed annually to ensure it is relevant to the changing needs of children with additional needs and SEN.

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