

24 June 2015

**Agenda Item
8(a)**

CLUSTER OF NEED FUNDING

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To seek the support of the Forum for consulting schools on the discontinuation of cluster of need funding.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Forum is asked to support consulting schools on discontinuing the cluster of needs funding arrangements.

3. Background

- 3.1 Cluster of need funding forms part of the Exceptional Needs funding arrangements for high needs pupils.
- 3.2 In any given period of time, certain schools may experience an unusual influx of pupils with SEND. While one or more of those pupils might attract individual exceptional needs funding, the combination of that funding and the notional SEND funding in the school's budget share might not fully fund the demands on the school with regard to all of their children with SEND. The cluster of need initiative enables these schools to make a submission to their area exceptional needs panel (ENP) for additional funding to support the whole school.
- 3.3 Each ENP has the option of allocating up to 10% of its annual budget allocation, where not already committed (or £50,000 if this is a lower figure) towards cluster of need allocations. In addition there is a £5k allocation per ENP for cluster of need funding for PVI nurseries.

Potentially this equates to a maximum of £376k in 2015-16, although in practice this is reduced by the level of commitments that the ENPs have for exceptional needs allocations for individual pupils.

4. Proposal for change

4.1 It has been identified by both the Exceptional Needs Advisory Group and the Business Group that a better use of this resource may be to allocate it instead to support individual pupils. If cluster of need funding was discontinued, the resource would remain within each ENP's budget and would be available to support allocations for individual pupils.

4.2 It is therefore proposed to include a question on discontinuing cluster of need allocations in the summer consultation.

The suggested question is: Based on the demands of individual children, should we be using some funding for cluster of need, or use it to support individual pupils' needs?

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Forum is asked to agree the recommendation in section 2.