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POST 16 HIGH NEEDS FUNDED PLACES AT COLLEGES

Report of the Operations Director, Education

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Schools Forum with regard to Post 16 High Needs funded places and developments following the paper that was tabled in December 2016.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This paper sets out the developments that have taken place since the Schools Forum decision to provide additional funding to the Post 16 high Needs Funding budget in 2017/18 and describes the outcomes.
- 2.2 The key areas of development are:
- Re-profile of planned numbers
 - Aligning support in schools and colleges for new placements
 - Reviewing current/on-going placements
 - Core Offer
 - Notional Budget

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Forum is asked to consider and accept the update in this paper.

4. Background

- 4.1 The majority of High Needs Funding post 16 FE/ISP budget (75%) is spent on placements in Hertfordshire's four Further Education (FE) colleges. The remaining 25% is spent on Independent Specialist provision (ISP) and Over the Border (OTB) FE College placements with other local authority colleges.

- 4.2 HNS funding of Hertfordshire colleges is affected by three key variables: hourly rates, volume/hours of support for each student, and demand for places using robust criteria for individual students.
- 4.3 The additional needs are assessed by the Local Authority's Post 16 High Needs Funding Panel, where a decision is made whether or not to provide funding including social care contributions to care costs.
- 4.4 It has been recognised that there is an increasing number of request (capacity) for Post 16 HNF and increasing complexity of need of those students.
- 4.5 At the Schools Forum meeting in December 2016, agreement was reached to fund an additional £243,000 in 2017/18 to reflect increasing demand on the post 16 HNF budget (number and complexity).

5. Post 16 HNF Update

- 5.1 This paper sets out what actions have been taken since December 2016, how they have been implemented and what the outcomes will be:
- 5.2 Pre-Placement - Aligning School and College Support
 - 5.2.1 As Children and Young People (C&YP) move from school to college, there is the possibility that support levels may change.
 - 5.2.2 Hertfordshire has worked in partnership with the Further Education (FE) Colleges to successfully ensure that there are no significant increases in the levels of support. To make this more transparent, the core support level information from schools is captured (in particular the ratio of Teaching Assistants (TAs)/Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) to students) to provide a benchmark for support in future college programmes. There are circumstances where support may increase as a student transitions into college (either because of the needs of the environment or as an interim measure during the induction period), but this new process will ensure that these cases are the exception and that for the majority there is clear continuity between school and college support.
 - 5.2.3 The school support levels are tracked back to year 11 in Special Schools. This will indicate future demand and cost drivers. The number of pupils in each school year, the profile of needs of those pupils, and their core support levels can be used to predict likely future destinations and to make broad predictions of potential costs for each cohort. This will also inform possible budget pressures early and to work with providers to mitigate this where possible.
- 5.3 On-Programme Review - Student Support Scrutiny
 - 5.3.1 A review process has been established for each college which involves a scrutiny of support levels for each individual and for each programme. Support levels are reviewed termly with college partners once students are on programme. This enables adjustments to support to be made for progression or interim arrangements. Whilst placements are individual, the overall support is reviewed by learner groups checking the aggregate support to see where any adjustments are required.

5.4 Programme Length – Defining a Core Offer

- 5.4.1 Working with our college partners as part of the SEND Strategy: Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) work stream programme, it is possible to define what is available to each learner as part of the Core Offer. The Core Offer for HNF students is now prescribed as a 2 year programme subject to exceptions. The course length and HNS funding will also be determined and aligned by the offer outlined in the Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP).
- 5.4.2 Colleges are required to provide very detailed evidence to support requests for funding beyond the Core Offer. This must include clarity regarding progression which will meet the criteria for funding beyond the Core Offer. The final decision is made through the usual HNF panel process.

5.5 Budget Management

- 5.5.1 For the academic year 2017/18, Hertfordshire has proposed Notional Budgets for the four Hertfordshire FE colleges. This will enable both parties to work in partnership to closely monitor and manage within the given budget constraints and highlight at an early stage any potential pressures. These notional budgets have been based on the average cost of a placement in 2016/17 and the planned learner numbers for 2017/18.
- 5.5.2 Re-profile of learner numbers for 2017-18 have been aligned with actual learner numbers and demand to meet capacity and manage budget spend.
- 5.6 Strategically, these actions fit with the Preparation for Adulthood Strategy and SEND Strategy; these strategies support the overall review required by the Department for Education.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This range of control measures will enable the demand pressures to be managed and future funding requirements predicted more accurately by re-profiling planned numbers, aligning school and college support more closely, reviewing on-programme support more robustly, and by creating a clear expectation for both students and colleges about what HCC will fund as part of the Core Offer.
- 6.2 The Schools Forum is asked to note the developments in Post 16 High Needs Funding over the last 6 months.