

Who is involved?

**Jennie Newman**, County Lead for SEN for Integrated Services for Learning (ISL) is leading this workstream. Jennie is working with a senior consultant **Peter Gray** and a broader stakeholder group including parents, early years, schools, settings, colleges and education staff and professionals and partner agency staff

## Exceptional Needs Funding Workstream

### Why is this work necessary?

Hertfordshire's current approach to funding children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools and settings was developed following an external review of practice in 2005. The review highlighted a number of issues (amount of time spent considering applications for relatively small amounts of money; bureaucracy; equity; financial sustainability) and a new system was introduced in 2007 following broad consultation with schools and other stakeholders. A further independent review is now being sought for the following reasons:

- 1) The Government's national funding reforms have meant that Local Authorities are expected to provide additional funding to mainstream on a 'top-up only' basis. This is making it more difficult for some schools/settings to meet exceptional needs.
- 2) There have been continuing questions about the consistency of decision-making by the County's ENF (Exceptional Needs Funding) panels (across different Districts, and different periods of time). LAs now also have responsibility for funding children and young people with SEND from 0-25 and it is important to ensure consistency across different age phases, as well as the range of types of need.
- 3) There have been a number of staff changes at senior level in schools and settings since the system was first introduced and some recently appointed managers are less familiar with the origins of the current Hertfordshire approach and its rationale.
- 4) With the new national SEND reforms, there is an expectation that decisions will be more personalised, with more active involvement of parents/carers and young people in determining the resources they require and how these will be used. Some parents currently feel excluded from the decision-making system and unsure how they can influence outcomes.
- 5) Increased budget pressures on Local Authorities and schools mean that it is more important than ever to ensure that SEND funding is used effectively and is 'value for money'. Issues have been raised about the use of additional funding (and delegated SEND budgets) in some schools, the effectiveness of current monitoring/review arrangements, and whether there is clear enough evidence to demonstrate positive outcomes.
- 6) Numbers of requests for pupils to be considered for ENF funding have risen significantly over recent years. This may be due to real increases in numbers of children with significant and complex needs. However, demand for additional funding may have risen for other reasons. It is important to understand trends more fully to inform budget decisions at County and local DSPL area level.
- 7) There has been some historical variation in ENF spend between Districts (even with adjustments made for size of area). Although some adjustments have been made to ensure greater equity, there may be a need to look again at budget distribution, to ensure a 'level playing field'

### Proposed outcomes of the workstream

- Review Hertfordshire's approach to meeting the needs of the most complex and exceptional needs children in mainstream schools
- Determine whether the existing arrangements are fit for purpose and make any necessary recommendations for change or alternative approaches

### Overall workstream objectives

The needs of the most complex and exceptional needs children in mainstream schools are met efficiently, equitably and effectively.

## What work will be done?

Ref	Activity	End Date
<b>Stage 1: Agreement on principle and evaluation criteria (county level)</b>		
1.1	Interview with school representatives (from Schools Forum and other relevant groupings)	January 2016
1.2	Interview with parent/carer representatives	January 2016
1.3	Interview with lead LA officers and ENF steering group	January 2016
<b>Stage 2: Review of ENF system 2015</b>		
2.1	Group interview with chairs of District ENF groups	Nov 2015
2.2	Group interview with school ENF representative from each District	February 2016
2.3	Individual interviews with SEN support service managers (including PEP)	January 2016
2.4	Data analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of cases presented/agreed/refused</li> <li>Type of cases presented/agreed/refused</li> <li>Age profile of cases presented/agreed/refused</li> </ul>	January 2016
2.5	File sample: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples of cases presented (range/county-wide)</li> <li>Focus on two contrasting Districts (selected on basis of data and any key differences in practice)</li> <li>Interviews with District ENF group members</li> <li>Interviews with other local Heads/SENCOs</li> <li>Individual interviews with parents/carers (cases agreed/refused)</li> <li>Panel observations (if feasible)</li> </ul>	February 2016
<b>Stage 3: Appraisal of future options:</b>		
3.1	Survey of processes used in other similar LAs	January 2016
3.2	Appraisal of relative positives/issues (against evaluation criteria agreed)	February 2016
<b>Stage 4: Analysis and write up</b>		
4.1	Analysis and write up	March 2016