

**Report to:** Schools Forum

**Date of meeting:** 9 July 2021

**Report By:** Director of Children’s Services

**Title:** Proposals for the Allocation of Short-term Additional Funding (STAF) - (Non-Statutory Funding)

**Purpose:** To provide an outline of a proposal through which schools can access non-statutory funding for children with SEND, on a time-limited basis, with an aim of supporting them within a mainstream environment.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

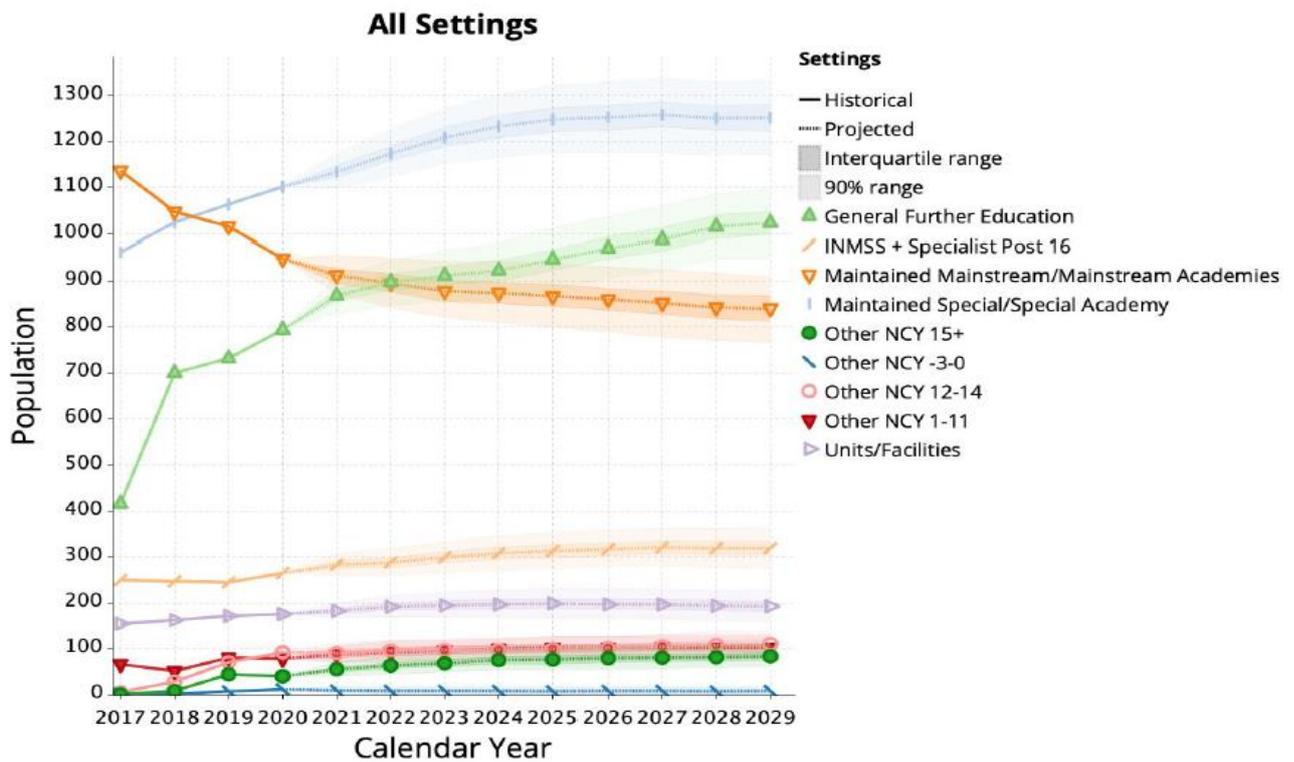
**1) That Schools’ Forum agrees to a pilot of Short Term Additional Funding (STAF) for two years starting Autumn 2021 to ascertain how well it supports schools making improved provision for children and young people with SEND.**

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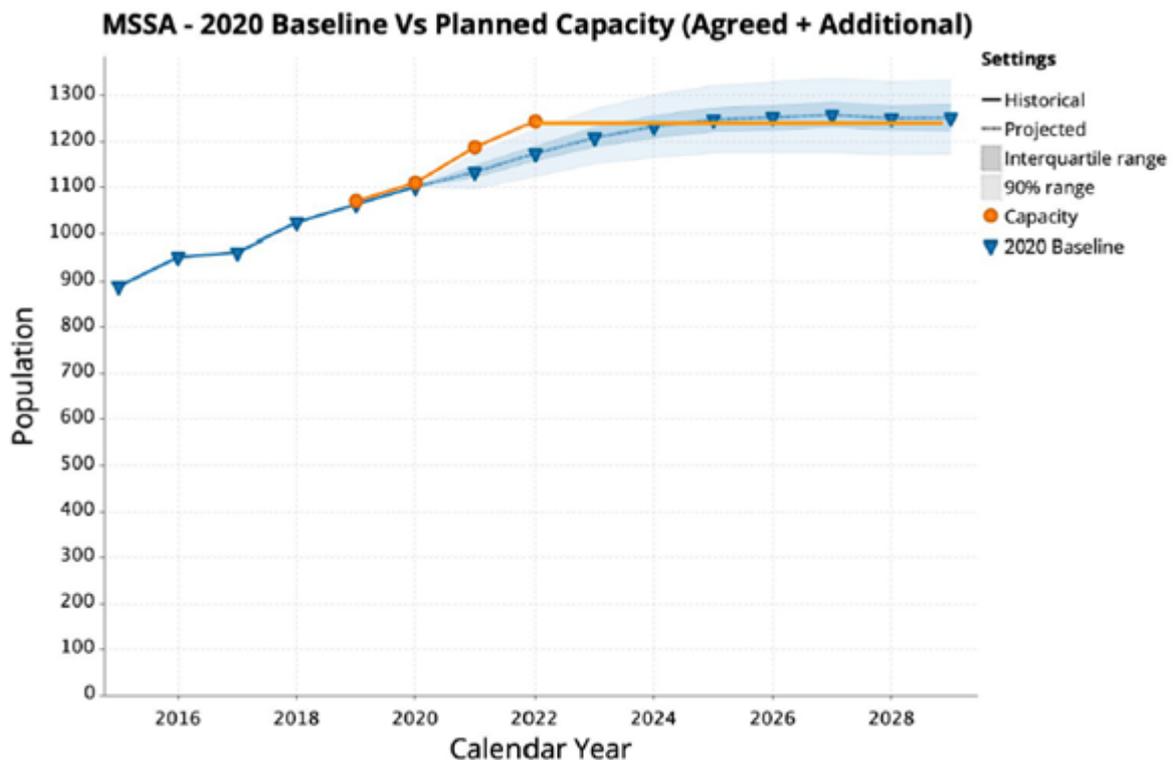
**1 Background**

1.1 There has been a noticeable increase in the number of requests for education, health and care needs assessment over the past few years, with a consequential increase in the number of EHC Plans maintained by the local authority. For the academic year 2014/15 there were 390 requests for assessment, and this has risen to 554 as at the end of the academic year 2019/20. The number of EHC Plans for the same period has risen from 2546 to 3510. Our forecasting models indicate a similar upward trend for at least the next 3 years - a significant cumulative increase since the 2014 SEND reforms.

1.2 In addition to an increase in the overall number of plans, the proportion of newly issued EHCPs being accepted into a mainstream school has decreased markedly from 37.9% in 2017 to 27.0% in 2020. Out of the total number of EHCPs in East Sussex, just 25% attend mainstream schools (a fall from 34% in 2018); this compares to 34% across England. Conversely, 40.1% of all children with an EHCP in East Sussex are in a special school (state-run and independent); this compares to 36.8% nationally. The impact of this is that the High Needs Block expenditure in East Sussex is more skewed towards non-mainstream provision than is the case elsewhere. The graph below shows the actual and projected number of children, by type of setting from 2017 to 2029:



1.3 Taking into account all of the new provision that has opened, or is planned to open over the next 18 months, we will only have capacity in the state-funded special sector until 2024/25, assuming that there is no change in the number of EHCPs issued or shifts in the proportion of those going into special provision. The graph below outlines the demand set against the current and planned capacity, further reinforcing the need to keep more children with SEND in their local mainstream school.



1.4 In East Sussex, the expectation is that settings will use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEND gets the support they need – this means doing everything they can to meet children and young people’s (CYP) SEND and ensuring attendance at their local

mainstream settings. There will be occasions when a setting may feel that despite all its best endeavours, with support from relevant professionals (ISEND Support Services), the CYP has made minimum or no progress, with the gap widening between his/her peers. Where the CYP's needs are deemed by all professionals to be long term, the request for an EHC needs assessment would be the most appropriate route to take. However, there will be occasions when a setting may decide that the needs of the CYP is such that a short-term focused intervention, with defined outcomes, would be the appropriate route to take. The support required, however, may be in excess of the notional SEN budget (or targeted funding in settings) but does not require an EHC plan to secure the best possible outcomes across education, health and social care. Under the current arrangements, there are no routes through which to source additional resources and, therefore, the only option is to apply for an EHC needs-assessment. The proposals outlined in this paper seek to address this gap and support schools to access additional resources through an alternative route.

## **2 Supporting information**

2.1 In order to create the opportunities outlined in paragraph 1.4 (above), ISEND is proposing to provide short-term additional funding (STAF) from the High Needs Block to schools to help support identified pupils with SEND who would benefit from higher level additional support in the short term in order to prevent a sustained increase in need, potentially requiring a long-term high level of support by means of an EHC Plan. This will ensure that confidence in "School SEN Support" is further enhanced, that pupils identified as having SEND are adequately supported and included in their local schools.

2.2 Such short-term additional funding would be to enable the achievement of specified outcomes for the CYP through the provision of an enhanced school Local Offer for a time-limited period. The funding will also be time-limited (one year) and there must be specific planned outcomes for the individual child or young person. All mainstream schools will be able to apply for such funding; however, it is recommended that in order to achieve best possible outcomes schools may consider applying for funding for primary pupils from Years 1 to 5 and Years 7 to 9 for secondary pupils. Appendix 1 outlines two cases where STAF may be appropriate for consideration.

2.3 Learning from other Local Authorities where allocation of non-statutory resources has led to escalating costs to the schools' High Needs Block, some safeguards have been included within these proposals:

- a) Schools will have to follow a robust application process, evidencing how they have used their notional SEN funding (£6k) and sought appropriate professional advice before making an application.
- b) The number of applicants will be capped once the budget is allocated (£0.5m per year).
- c) The funding will be time-limited for 12 months per CYP.
- d) Each child will be allocated a sum of funding. A proportion of this will be given to the school in 'cash'; the remainder must be used to fund enhanced support from services and to fund the regular monitoring of the plan on a termly basis (6 times a year), which will be undertaken through ISEND services.
- e) A STAF Oversight Group will be established (made up of school and LA representatives) whose function it is to agree the funding and to review the monitoring reports. A senior manager within ISEND will have oversight and responsibility for the budget.
- f) As with top-up funding, this would be paid to schools on a monthly basis and dependent upon evidencing implementation of agreed support through reviews.
- g) Schools will need to sign up to clear principles around supporting children in mainstream both during and after the funding period.

2.4 This proposal will cost circa £1,000,000 over a two-year period to be funded from the High Needs Block. If successful, there is the potential to have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people and the schools they attend. The process would aim to commence in the autumn of 2021, following communication with all schools (including SENCOs). After this period, the impact will be reviewed, and a report brought to Schools' Forum with further recommendations.

### **3. Conclusion**

3.1 There is no reason why less children in East Sussex with SEND should attend their local mainstream school than national or statistical neighbour averages. The increasing demand for specialist provision will outstrip local capacity by 2025 which means that difficult decisions will have to be made as to where High Needs Block resources are allocated. In the drive to support more children in their local mainstream school, it is timely to explore options where schools can access resources to maintain a broader number of children without the need to go through protracted statutory processes, where this may not be necessary. These proposals present an opportunity to pilot a new way of working that benefits schools and children as well as reinvest significant resources in mainstream schools.

3.2 Schools Forum is recommended to agree to this as a pilot project for two years to ascertain how well it supports schools making improved provision for children and young people with SEND.

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## Case examples where Short Term Additional Funding may be appropriate

### Key stage 1 child A

**Presentation:** SEMH and school are aware of trauma in early childhood. Demonstrates high levels of dysregulation, impulsivity, short concentration span, weak processing and working memory and finds it difficult to recall previous learning; all of which are acting as a barrier to learning and as a result child A is make little progress with their learning.

**School have implemented:** Some adult support to provide support in the classroom to prompt attention, provide instruction and support the child to identify their emotional state and act accordingly. Zones of regulation are being used as a tool to support the child's development of understanding their emotional state and how to respond. Class teacher uses differentiation effectively and plans learning that is engaging and at an appropriate level. Adult support is provided for small group interventions in literacy and sensory circuits. The school have been recorded to adopt a therapeutic approach to support pupils, including child A and appropriate adaptations are made to the behaviour policy. It has been noted by ESBAS that the school staff have a good understanding of child A's needs and respond to difficult and dangerous behaviours in a supportive manner; providing restorative processes to support the development of child A's understanding.

**Other services which have been involved:** EPS, ESBAS and CITES – and there is evidence that the recommendations made by services are in place.

**Further support that would be beneficial and enable progress:** School have carried out assessments in conjunction with the EPS and have concluded there are no additional learning needs and therefore request funding for:

Additional adult support, in the short term, to specifically provide some 1:1 mastery learning which will enable some progress to be made with learning and raise the child's self-esteem with an outcome of enabling child A to access the classroom learning more effectively.

Appropriate counselling sessions/CBT/Play Therapy Sessions – planned to be delivered for 1 year to support child A to understand the trauma they have experienced and enable then to develop an understanding of how this links to their SEMH and develop alternative responses to this. Outcome – child A develops greater independence in using zones of regulation or similar which enables improved engagement in the classroom, fewer demonstrations of difficult behaviour.

### Key stage 2 child B

**Presentation:** Has a diagnosis of ASD. Until year 3 child B has made age expected progress in most areas and in some above age expected. During year 3 their progress plateaus and by beginning of year 4 is below age expected as some regression in skills being demonstrated. Until year 3 child B has demonstrated complaint behaviour and has had amicable relationships with a group of peers. Towards the end of year 3 and into year 4 child B has demonstrated increasingly difficult behaviours. They are presenting with anxiety and parents report they are resistant to attending school.

**School have implemented:** Provided some adult support i.e. a trusted adult for the start and end of day that provides calm opportunity to consider the visual timetable for the day ahead and a debrief at end of day to support focusing on positives. Home school communication system is in place. Child B participates in a social skills intervention. CLASS have been involved and recommendations for the classroom have been implemented:

**Other services which have been involved:** CLASS – and there is evidence that the recommendations made by them have been implemented in the classroom.

**Further support that would be beneficial and enable progress:** School, parents and CLASS have concluded from their observations of child B that the underlying reason for a change in their presentation and engagement with their learning is due to a growing awareness of their difference and an increase widening of social development with their peers and therefore are seeking additional funding to:

Provide additional support to provide:

- 1:1 mentoring sessions to initially develop a better understanding of the causes of child B's anxiety and provide support for this using resources such as the Landscape of Fear and provide the adaptations required as a result. Outcome – improve engagement with the learning environment
- Provide 1:1 sessions to support child B to develop a better understanding of what ASD means for them and then adapted CBT sessions to provide child B with a greater understanding of their emotions, strategies to enable them to engage and participate in their learning and an understanding of how to problem solve independently. AND Provide sessions to promote self-esteem using the anxiety gremlin or similar – initially 1:1 and then small group possibly linked to the social skills group. Outcome: increase in child B's confidence and how they see themselves as a learner in their environment leading to return of engagement in their learning, attendance and a reduction in difficult behaviour.