

## High Needs Funding Guidance for Finance/Business Managers

**High Needs Funding is for learners who have a high level of Special Educational Needs/Disabilities and not all learners with SEND are high needs learners. You may also hear this funding referred to as Element 3 funding or Top Up Funding.**

Element 1 funding is the basic place funding that is available for every learner, in every setting, to access general learning. This can also be known as AWPU – age weighted pupil unit – and it varies according to the age of the learner and the type of setting that they are in. This funding pays for the overall running of the setting, the basic teaching offer that is available to all learners and all associated generic staffing costs.

Element 2 funding is the first layer of funding for SEND and is sufficient to meet the cost of high incidence, low level provision. In a specialist setting, where all learners will have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the setting will receive this SEND funding automatically for every learner. In a mainstream setting, where it is more difficult to identify the exact number of learners with SEND, the setting receives a notional amount of Element 2 SEND funding. The amount is calculated on proxy indicators that are closely related to SEND and this funding, although not ring-fenced, is clearly identified as a separate amount in the setting's annual budget. This funding pays for all SEND provision up to a threshold of £6,000 per learner.

Element 3 funding is the second layer of funding for SEND and is for learners whose provision costs more than the first £6,000 of Element 2 funding. In order to access High Needs Funding, the setting must clearly demonstrate the level of need and provision on an individual learner basis. A banding system is used in Suffolk to further identify escalating levels of high need and the bands are determined by matching to clear descriptors and exemplars. Once an application has been made for a band, it will be moderated by a team of professionals who are experienced SEND practitioners from a variety of settings.

There will be a designated person in your setting who is responsible for identifying your high needs learners and determining the HNF band that it would be suitable to make a request for. In a mainstream setting or a specialist unit attached to a mainstream setting, this is always the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo) but in specialist settings, it will usually be a member of the senior leadership team. In FE, they may be referred to as a SEND Manager. Each term there is an opportunity to make new applications for HNF or to ask for banding levels to be changed.

We require a termly spreadsheet that clearly identifies your existing learners with a band (this includes learners with a band who are new to your setting), your learners whose bands are no longer appropriate, your existing learners who have not been previously banded, your learners who are new to your setting and not been previously banded elsewhere, your learners who have left your setting and your learners who are dual placed with another setting. (Learners who are new to your setting who have been previously banded elsewhere, will automatically carry their band forward with them and should be placed on the Transfer tab on the next term's spreadsheet submission.) Any new applications or requests for changes to increase bands will go through a moderation process that takes place at Endeavour House each term. The moderation panel is made up of colleagues working across settings, with representatives from the primary, secondary, tertiary and specialist sectors, alongside colleagues from the Local Authority Specialist Education Services. There is also an opportunity for colleagues from a wider range of settings to observe the panel and you would be welcome to join us, should you so wish. Once moderated, we send your spreadsheet back and confirm your allocated bands for the term. Once the final band allocations are complete, you

will receive a payment. This payment is for one third of the value of the allocated bands and is the payment in arrears for the term in which it is paid.

The new value of the different bands, operational from Autumn 2024, is set as follows:

Band C - £1,554 – this gives a termly payment of £518

Band D - £3,405 – this gives a termly payment of £1,135

Band E - £5,670 – this gives a termly payment of £1,890

Band F - £8,454 – this gives a termly payment of £2,818

Band G - £10,824 – this gives a termly payment of £3,608

Band H - £13,404 – this gives a termly payment of £4,468

(Bands A and B do not have any funding associated with them and are there to profile learners with SEND who do not meet the level of need for HNF. You may see learners who have been moderated at Band B and this indicates that they have needs but do not meet the Band C descriptors. Band A is rarely used in this process as this is a very low level of SEND and we do not tend to see applications being made for these learners.)

You will always be able to predict your future funding for all agreed bands, as they will not change unless you request to change the band or we need to challenge the appropriateness of a band through our quality assurance work. This helps enormously when planning future budgets.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How do I know which learners in my setting have High Needs Funding?**

There will be a designated colleague in the setting who has responsibility for this and they will be able to give you information about your existing bands and any imminent changes or new applications that are planned. If, for any reason, that person is not available or unable to give you this information, please contact us and we will be able to help.

### **When are new applications and band change requests processed?**

Each term, we ask settings to provide a spreadsheet by the Wednesday before the half term break. This tells us if you have any new applications or changes of band requests and also confirms that existing learners with a band are still with you and their band remains appropriate. If you have any new or increased band change requests, we will require an evidence form to enable us to moderate your request(s). The evidence forms are due in on the Friday of the first week back after half term.

### **What if we have no new requests or band change requests?**

We still require a spreadsheet, so that we can ensure that funding for existing bands is paid accurately.

### **What if a band request is for a lower band than the existing band allocated?**

We do not require an evidence form for this – we can process your request without one.

### **Where can I find all the documents that are being referred to?**

All documents and guidance can be found at

[www.suffolklearning.com/inclusion/high-needs-funding](http://www.suffolklearning.com/inclusion/high-needs-funding)

### **When do we find out the allocations for our new requests?**

Once we have everyone's spreadsheets and evidence forms, we can organise a moderation panel. The moderation panel is currently made up of colleagues from settings who joined the new system in May 2019, colleagues from the Specialist Education Services who were trained during the spring 2021 term and additional colleagues from settings who have joined the panel after initially coming to observe. The moderators look at each individual request and decide whether the band requested is appropriate. If it is, this is agreed and the band is allocated. If the moderators do not think that the request is appropriate, they will suggest the band they think is accurate and this could be a lower or a higher band. This is then entered into a second layer of moderation. The lead moderators, who work for the Local Authority, then carry out the second moderation. This ensures that each application is fully considered and there is no requirement for an appeals process. In the past, when the first moderation took place, the results were notified and then there was an appeals process which involved LA moderators and a time factor of around two weeks. The existing system removes this time between the two processes. Once moderation is complete the spreadsheets are updated with the results and the bands are confirmed with the finance team at the LA. Mainstream schools, special schools and specialist units, who are now using the Perspective Lite platform for data sharing, will have a copy of their spreadsheet uploaded and this will have the moderation outcomes on it. For other settings still using the email system, we will contact you with your moderation outcomes.

### **How is the funding paid to settings?**

The LA funding team releases the funding and we always aim to ensure that this happens before the end of the term. Where academy chains have one central finance hub, they will receive funding for all its settings. It is important in these circumstances, that finance/business managers are fully aware of the bandings for each setting and can calculate individual amounts. In cases of difficulty with this, we are always happy to help.

### **What if the funding is not the expected amount?**

The LA finance team will calculate the amount based on the bands allocated to each setting and this should tally with the information sent to the setting after moderation. It is not impossible for mistakes to be made and we would rather be notified straight away if you think that this has happened. If the setting receives banding confirmations that are incomplete or are thought to be inaccurate, we need to know straight away.

### **Why do learners with bands sometimes not get their funding paid?**

The main reasons why this happens is either a learner is in alternative provision that has been provided by the Local Authority or a learner has been signed off by a health professional as unfit to attend.

**Alternative Provision** – when a Pre-16 learner is placed in alternative provision, even if it is full time, they must remain on a substantive school roll. There are many types of alternative provision – if they are directly funded by the Local Authority and the setting does not pay anything towards the costs, then the LA is double funding this learner, with Element 1 and 2 funding being paid twice. The costs for an individual learner are spread across the two settings and the substantive setting therefore does not require high needs funding at this time. We are however, seeing an increasing number of cases where settings are paying directly for AP and need the high needs funding to contribute towards the cost, so it is crucial that this is communicated on a learner's costed provision map. The moderators are building up a list of non-LA provisions and this is being constantly added to, but we need the setting to be really clear about the provision and who is paying the costs. If a

learner is retaining a band and no provision map is involved, please indicate this information in the Comments section on the spreadsheet.

**Medically Unfit** – if a learner is signed off as unfit to attend, the high needs funding may not be paid. In many of these circumstances the LA will be funding other provision through its Specialist Education Services and there will be no cost to the setting but this may only be a limited offer and the setting may need to source other alternative provision alongside. If this is the case, HNF payments to the setting will continue. As with AP, please let us have as much information as possible so that we can evaluate each individual's circumstances accordingly.

### **Why do learners with bands sometimes only get pro-rata funding?**

There are many reasons why a learner may be placed on a part timetable and schools should always let us know when this is the case. It is expected that this will always be a temporary measure and will not remain the case in the longer term. For the first term that the learner is on the part timetable, we will pay the full high needs funding – this is because we recognise that all part timetables must be agreed by the parent/carer(s) and they can revoke it without notice. There must be a significant increase in the timetable by the following term and we will contact the setting to check that this has happened, as part of our quality assurance work. If this is not the case, we will pro-rata the funding according to the timetable in the previous term and assume that the full funding already allocated will cover the current term. Obviously, there are some circumstances where this will not be so straightforward and we would discuss individual cases before arriving at the level of pro-rata to be applied. All application form is not involved, please share any attendance information on the spreadsheet.

### **How is a learner's provision costed?**

We ask for a costed provision map on all learner applications and there is separate guidance on the website about costed provision mapping. You will find it useful to have a look at these provision maps and see how your learners' costings relate to your staffing costs and you may need to discuss this with the person making the applications, especially if these comparisons do not tally. The subject of 'on costs' for staffing is regularly debated and again the guidance goes into this aspect.

### **What is the funding mostly for?**

High Needs Funding is to pay for the support and resources required to put the provision in place to meet an individual learner's needs. If a learner has an Education Health and Care Plan, the support and resources will be clearly defined but you should be aware that a learner does not need to have a plan to be allocated HNF. Support comes in many forms and is provided by staff with a variety of skills levels and pay grades. Some resources are appropriately funded via HNF but there are some that do not come within its scope. The costed provision map guidance explains all of these aspects.

### **What is my role in determining how High Needs Funding is spent?**

High Needs Funding is allocated to individual learners and as such, there is no debate about how the money is spent. You cannot receive this funding and spend it on anything else – including provision for another learner. The costed provision maps and timetables on learners' application forms will enable you to see what provision should be in place. If a learner does not need some or all of the funding that you receive for them, they should be entered for a change of band and their decreased

needs/provision declared. As part of the new quality assurance work, we will carry out checks from time to time and for learners who have retained bands over the last two academic years, we will start to ask for updated evidence.

**What if I am new to the role and I need further help?**

The answer to this question is the same as it would be for any new member of staff who is dealing with high needs funding – we are here to help and there are many experienced colleagues close by who will be happy to mentor you. If you need our help, then please email us:

[joy.settle@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:joy.settle@suffolk.gov.uk)

[rebecca.piotrowski@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.piotrowski@suffolk.gov.uk)

[april.oliver@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:april.oliver@suffolk.gov.uk)

We can also put you in touch with more experienced colleagues in your area if you do not know how to make contact.