

# **HIGH NEEDS FUNDING – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **1. Where do I find the information and guidance for HNF?**

There are three main sources of information – Suffolk Headlines, the Suffolk Learning website and the SENCo News Bulletin. Suffolk Headlines goes out every Tuesday and any new information and guidance about HNF will be communicated when appropriate. There will be links here to the important documentation that you need. A copy of this will then be placed on Suffolk Learning, alongside the documents and guidance that you need for the process. You can access this via [www.suffolklearning.com/inclusion/high-needs-funding](http://www.suffolklearning.com/inclusion/high-needs-funding). There will also be updates and information on the SENCo News Bulletin. Please get in touch if you are not receiving Suffolk Headlines and we can help you to establish this link.

## **2. What do I do if I need help?**

By accessing the guidance that is on the Suffolk Learning website, you should be able to find all the information and documents that you need to complete HNF applications for your setting. We have included Banding Descriptors and Exemplars taken from previous applications, to help you to define what a high needs learner is and what the different bands look like. We have worked with many of our SEND colleagues, both throughout the moderation process and in earlier HNF Workshops, and all are keen to support colleagues who are new to the process. There will be regular updates at the SES SENCo Forums and there are support networks across the county. Try to make contact with other SENDCos in your area and find out what support networks are available to you. If all else fails, you can contact us via the funding hub (see below).

## **3. How do I send in my applications and evidence?**

The system called Perspective Lite, which is part of the Broadcast Plus platform, is being used for most HNF document sharing now. Schools will already be familiar with this as it is used for sharing census and examination data. We hope to extend the system to FE settings and out of county schools in the future.

### **Mainstream, Special and Specialist Unit Settings**

All spreadsheets and evidence forms should be shared on Perspective Lite and this involves being assigned to the HNF Lead role by your Headteacher. We have called it HNF Lead to encompass the different job titles that exist in all of our settings. If you have a specialist unit and have more than one spreadsheet or you have multiple Word document evidence forms, these can now be uploaded individually onto Perspective Lite. If there is anyone who needs to access the system but they don't have an email address that relates to the setting – e.g. a colleague from the Local Authority who is based in a setting – then we can arrange for Perspective Lite to allocate your email to the setting. This system also saves you time because instead of receiving an email with your moderation results and then having to commute them across to next term's spreadsheet, you will find a spreadsheet that is already populated, uploaded onto Perspective Lite at the end of each term.

### **FE Settings/Out of County settings**

For now, your spreadsheets and evidence forms will continue to be shared via secure emails and the existing arrangements remain in place:

Spreadsheets and evidence forms should be submitted electronically to the funding hub at [InclusionFundingHub@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:InclusionFundingHub@suffolk.gov.uk)

It is imperative that this data is sent securely using the following guidance:

**Sending sensitive email to Suffolk County Council – if your organisation or email provider doesn't have a secure email connection with SCC (known as a TLS connection), you'll need to request a secure Thread" or conversation with the Council. Once this secure thread is established, all subsequent replies in the conversation/thread are secure.**

**To request a secure thread:**

- Send a standard email to the Funding Hub or any named HNF contacts at SCC
- In your email, ask your SCC contact to reply and mark the email Official-Sensitive. This will set up the secure thread.
- Once, you've opened the reply they send you, you'll be able to reply to this enclosing any sensitive information you want to send to the Council.

**PLEASE DO NOT ADD ANY FURTHER ENCRYPTION OR PASSWORD PROTECTION.**

It is your responsibility to send the information to SCC securely. Failure to do so could result in a data breach which your setting will be responsible for.

Please securely send your HNF spreadsheets and evidence to [InclusionFundingHub@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:InclusionFundingHub@suffolk.gov.uk) and ensure you use the subject heading "HNF Moderation" to return your information, so it can be easily identified.

By using this system, you do not need to apply any further encryption or password protection to your document(s).

If you are still unsure, it is better to get in touch with us and ask first before sending any data via email.

**Please ensure that you mark the email subject as "HNF Moderation".**

#### **4. How will I know that my data has been received?**

All documents uploaded onto Perspective Lite by the deadline date, will be retrieved. If you are concerned about any aspects of this retrieval, you can email our Business Support Officer for help:

[jen.makin@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:jen.makin@suffolk.gov.uk)

If you have sent us a spreadsheet or evidence form(s) via email, we will acknowledge receipt of your email if you request it.

#### **5. When does my spreadsheet need to be sent in by?**

The deadline for spreadsheet submissions is clearly shown on the website and will always be the Wednesday before the half term holiday begins. This gives you time in the first part of the term to assess your learners and complete the applications for any new learners or learners whose needs have changed.

#### **6. What do I need to do next?**

You will need to complete an application form for all new learners or learners requiring a change to a higher band. Again, there are examples and a guidance document on Suffolk Learning for this – please remember that we do not require to see any other evidence at this point. If you indicate that a learner has an EHCP and we need to see it, we can access it here. If you indicate that there are reports and documents that will support the application, we expect you to include the key information and major findings when you describe the needs of the learner. It is unlikely, but if moderation can only be completed if these documents are available to us, we will make the necessary arrangement with you to access them.

The deadline for evidence form submissions is clearly shown on the website and will always be the Friday of the first week back after the half term holiday.

#### **7. What do I need to include in my evidence submission?**

The evidence form itself is very clear about what you need to include. The examples and guidance document show how to present your evidence and it is expected that all sections will be completed. If a learner is new to your setting and you have not got the evidence to support their needs (assessments/data/service involvement etc.), then you should consider waiting until you have this information before making an application. We will not be able to process applications that have not been fully completed. Equally, we would not expect to receive an application above a Band D for a learner who has not been referred to any of the services that are available free of charge through the Local Authority, unless you have been

met with persistent parental refusal to allow this to happen. Please refer to the example evidence forms and the guidance document available on the Suffolk Learning website.

## **8. How and when will my submissions be moderated?**

For mainstream applications we have a moderation system that involves a panel of SENDCOs and other SEND colleagues. This is on a much smaller scale to previous moderation processes – mainly because the evidence is electronic and we are restricted by the number of people who can be given access at any one time. Colleagues from all phases of education join us to carry out moderation and we will be keeping a consistent panel, with some opportunities for new colleagues to join us. These opportunities will enable more colleagues to gain experience of this very valuable opportunity for professional development. Please let us know if you would like to observe the panel, with a view to being considered as a future moderator.

For specialist units, special schools, FE settings and out of county settings, the moderation is carried out by the two Lead Moderators who work for the Local Authority. Some of our larger special schools and FE settings may have multiple applications, especially in the autumn term, so we would carry out moderation from verbal evidence given in a Teams meeting.

## **9. When will I know the outcome of my submissions?**

When moderation has been completed, we will let you know the outcomes of your submissions. We expect this to be by the end of term and we aim to release the funding in readiness for the new term ahead. (This may vary for the spring term, dependent on when Easter falls.) For mainstream, special and specialist unit settings, your moderation outcomes will be on the new spreadsheet that we upload onto Perspective Lite. For FE settings and out of county schools, we will let you know your moderation outcomes via email.

## **10. What if I want to appeal any decisions made by the moderators?**

There will be no appeals system as the moderation process will have already applied a second layer of quality assurance to any bandings that are different from the one requested. In other words, the appeals system is inbuilt into the moderation system and is carried out on your behalf before a final decision is made. The second, and sometimes third layer of quality assurance, is carried out by colleagues who are working in specialist SEND services and by the colleagues who are leading on HNF for the Local Authority. If you still feel that a learner's needs have not been fully recognised, you can enter further evidence next time.

## **11. How do I plan for staffing and resources when the funding isn't available until the end of the term?**

High Needs Funding is top up funding and is just one part of the funding that provides for learners with complex SEND. In any one academic year, the Element 2 funding already available in all settings, will cover the first £6,000 of provision. In all cases, this means that the funding for the first part of the Autumn term is available in the main budget and the top up funding will cater for the later stages of the academic year. The good thing about this, moving forward with learners retaining their band, is that financial planning is much easier because their HNF is already known.

## **12. How often will I be asked to submit a spreadsheet and evidence forms?**

There will be a termly requirement to submit a spreadsheet, even if you do not want to make any new or amended submissions. By leaving learners on the Learners with a Band tab on the spreadsheet each term, you are confirming that they are still attending your setting, their band remains appropriate and you are requesting that their funding is paid for another term. If you do have any new or amended submissions, you will be asked for evidence a few weeks after the spreadsheet has been sent in. This will be a termly exercise for as long as the current systems apply.

**13. What happens if a learner with a band arrives in my setting after the deadline has passed and the funding has gone to a previous setting?**

The first thing to do is to ascertain, from the previous setting if possible, what that learner's allocated band is. We cannot carry out any financial recoupment within a term, so you will need to speak to the previous setting and come to some agreement about how they will pass on the proportion of HNF funding due for that term. The sooner you communicate this to us the better and we will ensure that no more funding goes to a previous setting. You will then enter them next term on the Transfer tab on the spreadsheet. The only exception to this would be if you want to apply for a change to the band.

**14. What happens if a learner leaves my setting after the deadline has passed?**

The funding will be paid to your setting for the term. As with the guidance above, you may need to arrange with another setting to pass on part of the funding that you have received. You will then enter the learner on the Learners Left tab in the next term.

**15. What happens when the learner accesses alternative provision that the setting pays for?**

If you source your own alternative provision for a learner, then you can use the HNF to contribute towards the cost of this provision. You will remain responsible for ensuring that the provision is appropriate, safe and meets all quality assurance guidelines. The HNF band is based on the learner's needs and what the provision would look like in your setting, we cannot increase a band just to cover the cost of expensive alternative provision. Please ensure that you let us know when you are funding your own alternative provision, otherwise we will assume that it is a Local Authority placement and HNF will not be paid.

**16. What if a learner lives in a different Local Authority to the setting?**

The crucial thing to take into consideration here, is whether the learner has an EHCP. If they do, their home LA will be responsible for Element 3 funding and you will need to make your own arrangements for accessing this. This now also applies for a Child in Care, as Suffolk is part of the Eastern Region agreement to no longer recoup between local authorities (please see policy document on website). If the learner is on SEN Support, we can process an application for them as normal.

**17. Will we receive HNF when a learner goes onto a part timetable?**

Part timetables should only ever be a temporary arrangement and there should be a clear plan for a gradual return to full time. HNF is always paid in full for the first term that a part timetable starts. This is because we recognise that any arrangement like this must be agreed by the parent/carer and the agreement could be revoked at any time without notice. The setting then has the guarantee that they will not lose out financially at this time. We would expect to see a clear increase to the timetable in the next term and if this is not the case, we would pro-rata the funding accordingly. This is because there should be HNF left over from the previous term that has not been required whilst on the part timetable. You must let us know when a learner is placed on a part timetable and keep us updated about progress in subsequent terms. In most cases you will not be completing an evidence form so you will need to use the Comments column on the spreadsheet each term to record this information. Alternatively, you can email us with the information.