

# Devolved and Delegated Funding

As a development of the original Local Management of Schools initiatives, the government has required Local Education Authorities to delegate to schools an increasing proportion of the education funding, so that more money is directly controlled by each school, rather than being held in a central fund controlled by the LEA. This process has applied to funding for special educational needs as well as for more general education budgets. For example, in September 1999, 25% of the Wakefield budget for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs was passed to schools. This proportion represented devolution of the LEA's spending on "high incidence" special needs, such as behavioural and learning difficulties.

From 1st April 2002, the Government required LEAs to pass to schools at least 87% of the money in the LEA's education budget. Accordingly, Wakefield LEA has devised systems which, as well as delegating funding for "high incidence" special needs, provides schools with most of the budget for "low incidence" special needs. This paper explains the systems used to give each school a fair proportion of the available money for special needs spending.

## The Two Groups of Need

For funding purposes, special educational needs are classified into two broad groups. The way that funding is worked out for each group is different and is detailed on the next page.

High incidence needs are the kind of special educational needs which a high proportion of children with SEN have and which are likely to be found in any school. These are:

- moderate learning difficulties;
- emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; and
- specific learning difficulties.

Some children with a high incidence need, like emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, may be classified as having a low incidence

need if their learning or behavioural difficulties are exceptionally severe and are recognised as such in a Statement of SEN.

Low incidence needs are the kind of special educational needs, which a smaller proportion of children have and which will not be found in every school. Low incidence needs include:

- severe learning difficulties;
- physical difficulties;
- hearing impairment;
- visual impairment;
- multi-sensory impairment;
- autistic spectrum disorder; and
- speech, language/communication need.

These categories are subject to review and may be changed. For example, just a few years ago, children with autistic spectrum disorder were very rare in Wakefield schools but the number of diagnoses of ASD and Asperger Syndrome has risen significantly in recent years.

Devolved funding and delegated funding are both strategies for moving money from the LEA to schools, but there are differences in the ways the amounts of money are calculated.

## Devolved Funding

Each year, Wakefield LEA determines an amount of money available to be spent on pupils with high-incidence special educational needs. The total amount of money is dependent on central government decisions about how much local authorities receive from the government and can raise from their own Council Tax. All the money allocated to high incidence SEN is shared out amongst all Wakefield mainstream schools; special schools and specialist-resourced provisions are funded separately. It is "devolved", rather than "delegated" funding, as the LEA has a legal duty to monitor that the money is appropriately spent on children with SEN. The money is shared out using a formula to calculate each school's proportion. Three factors have been identified as elements in the formula:

- 1) the number of children in a school who are known to be entitled to free school meals and clothing allowances;
- 2) the number of pupils on roll at the school; and
- 3) the number of pupils at the school in Nursery, Year 1 and Year 2 (KS1).

The three factors above are given a weighting to ensure an overall fair distribution of money.

Entitlement to free school meals and clothing allowances accounts for 91% of the weighting. Of the statistics that the LEA has access to, the proportion of children receiving free school meals has the best correlation with the proportion of pupils with SEN. It is not a perfect measure. For example, "free school meals" may actually indicate the take-up of free meals, not the entitlement to free meals. Other predictors of rates of SEN, such as standards of parental education or family incomes were not available to the LEA. The number of children who receive free school meals in a school is easy to calculate from information, which is readily available without lengthy research or intrusive questioning.

Number on roll has a weighting of 4.5% of the weighting. A date in January is chosen for all schools to record (on Form 7) the number of pupils on roll on that day. Families move and there are changes to the number of pupils in schools each week, so schools complete a second form in October, recording changed

numbers on roll. School budgets are amended to reflect changes since the previous calculation.

The number of early years pupils also has a weighting of 4.5% of the weighting. Wakefield's SEN policy recognises the value of early intervention, so a proportion of the additional money is allocated to pupils in Key Stage 1.

## Delegated Funding

Wakefield LEA has a budget for pupils with low-incidence special educational needs, where there will be far fewer cases and their distribution in schools will be uneven. Clearly, the money for these kinds of special needs should not be shared out proportionately between schools, since one school could have several children with low-incidence needs while a neighbouring school might have none. Funding for low-incidence special needs is based upon actual pupils in each school, while devolved funding for high-incidence special needs is based on a projection or an estimate of a school's likely numbers of children with high-incidence special educational needs.

All children with a statement, which indicates a low-incidence special educational need, are recorded on the Special Educational Needs database (SPEN) in County Hall. On a set date in October each year, SPEN produces a snapshot of additional funding applying in that week. For each school, SPEN calculates the total additional hours of support for each pupil who has a statement, which contains funding for support. If Sunnyview Primary School has pupil A with 6 hours per week of additional support; pupil B with 8.5 hours per week and pupil C with 12.5 hours per week, and only these three pupils have statements giving additional support, the total support is  $6 + 8.5 + 12.5 = 27$  hours per week. Children changing schools are monitored and a re-calculation is made in March, with an adjustment to school budgets in April.

SPEN also produces the total number of hours of support funded in all schools in Wakefield LEA. Each year, this is around 425,000 hours. The delegated funding budget can then be divided by the total number of support hours to produce an average hourly cost of support. Sunnyview Primary will then receive  $27 \times$  the average hourly cost for its low-incidence SEN.

## **Central LEA Funding**

A small budget is still held centrally to fund:

- support for children with Wakefield statements, but who attend schools in other LEAs;
- interim support for pupils who do not have a statement for exceptional and time-limited events, such as temporary physical difficulties associated with leg-lengthening procedures;
- additional support for pre-school children attending an independent “eligible provider” under the government scheme for pre-school provision;
- additional support for specific needs of pupils on tuition, for example, following an exclusion.