



Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

17 December 2018

To : Local Authority Chief Executives; Directors of Children's Services.

HIGH NEEDS PROVISION AND SUPPORT

I announced today, allocations to local authorities (LAs) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). In recognition of the cost pressures that LAs are experiencing on the high needs element of this Grant, I have set out, below, a set of further measures that I am taking alongside these allocations.

Our ambition for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is exactly the same as for every other child – to achieve well in school and college, find employment and go on to live happy and fulfilled lives. High needs funding has already risen by £1 billion, from £5 billion in 2013 to £6 billion this year. As part of our wide-ranging reforms to the SEND system in 2014, we introduced Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, to ensure that support is tailored to the needs of individuals, and families are put at the heart of the process. Already, more than 320,000 children and young people are benefiting from these.

Today I am announcing, on top of existing high needs allocations:

- an additional £250 million of high needs funding – £125 million for 2018-19; £125 million for 2019-20; and, have published allocations for each LA;
- a further £100 million top-up to the Special Provision Capital Fund for local authorities in 2019-20, to take our total investment to £365 million across 2018-21, for the new places and improved facilities you have identified you need. This funding can be used for more places in SEN units and resourced provision in mainstream schools or colleges; in special schools; or in any of the other types of provision you use for pupils and students with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. This funding is for places needed up to 2021 and the specific amount for each LA will be published in due course; and
- the removal of the cap on the number of special and alternative provision free school bids that we will approve as part of the current wave. Instead of approving around 30 bids, as we previously proposed, we now anticipate being able to approve all those LA bids that fully meet the criteria for the wave and will, therefore, contribute to relieving

high needs funding revenue pressures.

I am aware that many LAs have already proposed to move funding between blocks of the DSG in 2019-20, principally from the schools block to the high needs block, in the usual way. Given the announcement today of additional funding for the high needs block, we expect that some LAs may therefore want to review these proposals. If you have submitted requests to the department to do so, you may wish to reduce or remove these requests. We will provide a window early in the New Year for you to do so.

Central government plays an essential role in providing additional revenue and capital funding to support LAs and providers to meet special educational needs, but we must also ensure that we achieve good value for money both now and in the future; and understand what types of spend improves outcomes. To that end, I am pleased to announce that I am commissioning 'SEN Futures', a flagship package of long-term research and analysis to provide evidence on the impact of current SEN provision on children and young people's outcomes, and to assess the value for money of SEN provision in England. Procurement for the first pieces of work in this programme has begun today: more details on this can be found [here](#).

Alongside central government, LAs, of course, play an essential role in providing strategic leadership and oversight of the services, provision and funding for children and young people with SEND in their area; and all education providers – whether mainstream or special, school or college, within the area or outside it – must contribute to meeting special educational needs – and must be part of this conversation. Many LAs have embraced their new role as strategic commissioners, but more remains to be done.

We are seeing some excellent practice through our joint Ofsted/CQC local area SEND inspections, for example the recent positive inspections in Lincolnshire and Milton Keynes, and I am pleased that the revisits to local areas who were required to produce a Written Statement of Action are now beginning. However, the inspections are also showing that the experiences of children, young people and their families are inconsistent across education, health and social care – with too many parents still saying they have to fight to access services.

To further assist LAs and education providers, I am pleased to announce several supporting additional measures. These include:

- outlining the next steps to establish a new SEND System Leadership Board focused on improving local joint commissioning, as recommended by Dame Christine Lenehan's review into the experiences and outcomes of children in residential special schools and colleges. We are also establishing regular joint Ministerial roundtables with the Department for Health and Social Care to give providers, users and voluntary sector organisations further opportunities to input their views and insight across the SEND system. Nadhim Zahawi, Minister for Children and Families, has written separately to Dame Christine today to provide further details on [this](#);

- reviewing current SEND content in Initial Teacher Training provision (ITT) and building on our existing SEND specialist qualifications to develop a continuum of learning from ITT, through teachers' early careers and into specialist and leadership roles in support of the upcoming Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy;
- ensuring a sufficient supply of Educational Psychologists (EPs), trained and working within the system to carry out the statutory functions linked to the EHC plan process, and to support teachers and families. We will be funding three more cohorts of EP trainees, starting in September 2020; and will increase the number of trainees from 160 to at least 206, to reflect increased demand;
- holding, in early 2019, an evidence-gathering exercise on the financial incentives in the current arrangements, in particular on the operation and use of mainstream schools' notional SEN budget, which pays for the costs of special educational provision up to £6,000.

I recognise the rising demand for EHC plans for those over 19, and the need for education, health and social care services to agree a shared vision of what good life outcomes look like for an individual, and when it is right to cease an EHC plan. We have commissioned one of our delivery partners, the National Development Team for Inclusion to work with 20 local authorities to develop and model effective practice on this, and to share their findings across regions.

I also want to continue to ensure that services for young people with SEND effectively prepare them for adulthood, including employment: raising expectations and aspirations for young people, their parents, education providers and employers. My officials are working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions on this, and we are committed to finding ways to support more young people with SEND into sustainable employment. I want our wider reforms to post-16 education, including T Levels, to be accessible to those with SEND and will continue to support close working between colleges, schools and local authorities to improve pathways to adulthood.

I look forward to working together with you over the coming months to see what more can be done to help you manage cost pressures and improve service delivery at a local level.



Damian Hinds
Secretary of State for Education