

**19 June 2023****Agenda item 8****REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES****EXCEPTIONAL PAYMENTS FOR SCHOOL CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR  
2023-24****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report invites the Select Committee to consider the following proposals and make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families prior to decisions being taken:
  - a) to continue to adopt an agreed scale of payments as a guide for school clothing and footwear allowances paid under the category of exceptional circumstances, subject to discretion, for 2023-2024.
  - b) to review the budget for school clothing and footwear allowances paid under the category of exceptional circumstances to ensure that the budget allocated meets demand from April 2024.

**Information**

2. School clothing allowances are discretionary, and any allowance scheme must be funded by the County Council. Discretionary school clothing allowance has not been available since 2010/2011 for families living in Nottinghamshire. However, the County Council retains discretion to consider requests for assistance from families in exceptional circumstances to support the most vulnerable families. Included in this category are families who have lost clothes in a fire, a flood, theft, have been made homeless or who are fleeing domestic violence.
3. There was an increase in the claims made during the 2022/23 financial year, with £673.75 payments made. This was the first year that the £500 budget was overspent.
4. The County Council must consider, under Section 510 of the Education Act 1996 and Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2002, requests for assistance from families in exceptional circumstances. This applies to all school age children and to families living outside the County if their children attend County schools.
5. Information is available on the Council's public website about the school clothing allowance and advice on how applications can be submitted. In addition, information is included in

the Admissions to Schools: Guide for Parents each year. Following Children and Young People's Select Committee consideration of the policy in October 2022, a range of steps were taken to increase awareness, including inclusion within school admissions training for elected members and awareness raising with partner organisations including the fire service. A briefing was also provided to educational settings including governors.

6. In order to ensure that there is consistency and fairness in the amounts paid out under the category of exceptional circumstances, it is proposed to continue to adopt, as a guide only, a maximum allowance of £50 per qualifying pupil.
7. It is proposed to continue to apply the same scale of payments:
  - 50% of the maximum allowance for primary age children
  - 75% of the maximum allowance for secondary age children.

This would apply to all school age children and to families living out of the County if their children attend a school in Nottinghamshire. Each case is assessed individually, and an amount determined, for example a family that has requested support following a house fire where all clothing has been destroyed would receive consideration for the maximum allowance payable at £50 per child. In other cases where the family require some additional support with clothing, the amount payable is usually set at 50% of the maximum allowance (that is, £25 for primary age) and 75% of the maximum allowance (that is, £37.50 for secondary age) depending upon the specific family circumstances.

8. This is a guide only, as the County Council must consider the circumstances of individual cases in order not to fetter its discretion.
9. In line with the County Council's financial regulations, school clothing and footwear allowances are reviewed annually and as explained in this report it is proposed to continue to provide a fair and consistent approach for determining the amount of allowances paid under the exceptional circumstances category.
10. The existing arrangements enable the most vulnerable families, irrespective of age or the type of school their child attends, to apply for assistance with school clothing allowance. The values set are intended to support families with the cost of school uniform.

## **Financial Implications**

11. There may be a small amount of funding claimed to support families with the cost of school clothing and footwear under exceptional circumstances. Based on the claims made in 2022/23, the cost is likely to be circa £700 (see **paragraph 3**). The existing budget is £500 per annum and any expenditure must be met by the Council. The current overspend can be contained within the overall Education, Learning & Skills budget of £6.6m.
12. It is proposed that the budget for school clothing and footwear allowances paid under the category of exceptional circumstances be reviewed to ensure that the budget allocated meets need from April 2024.

## RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Children and Families Select Committee considers the following proposals contained in the report and makes any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families prior to decisions being taken:
  - a) to adopt an agreed scale of payments as a guide for school clothing and footwear allowances paid under the category of exceptional circumstances, subject to discretion, for 2023-2024, as detailed in **paragraphs 6 & 7**
  - b) to review the budget for school clothing and footwear allowances paid under the category of exceptional circumstances to ensure that the budget allocated meets demand from April 2024.

**Councillor Tracey Taylor**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Families**

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### **Constitutional Comments (KK 31/05/2023)**

13. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee.

### **Financial Comments (SS 31/05/2023)**

14. The existing budget is £500 per annum and is met by the Council. The current spend can be contained within the overall Education, Learning & Skills budget of £6.6 million.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

15. Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.
  - [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2022 to 2023 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2022-to-2023-academic-year)
  - [School Uniform Guidance for Schools updated 19 November 2021](#)
  - [Education \(Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms\) Act 2021](#)
  - [Cost of school uniforms - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-school-uniforms)
  - [Financial support for the cost of school uniform - report to Children & Young People's Select Committee on 10 October 2022](#)

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All.

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