

## **SEND Budget for Families of Schools: underspend 2014-15**

### **Purpose of the Report**

At the last meeting of Schools Forum on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2015, the schools' budget final accounts for 2014-15 were considered. The accounts included a carry-forward of £342,210 of unspent funds against the SEND Budget for Families of Schools.

The Forum asked that the reasons for this underspend be investigated and explained. This report is the outcome of that investigation.

### **Background**

The total SEND Budget for Families of Schools for 2014-15 was £7.883m. This comprised:

- *Additional Family Needs (AFN) funding of £6.766m.*

This element of the budget was intended to provide additional, individually-targeted support for pupils with a range of special educational needs that are more complex than those typically met via the Place Funding (elements 1 and 2) that is already available to schools.

Decisions on how Family resources were allocated to each school were made by the Family itself. Each individual school (in practice the head teacher and SENCO) then determined the practical arrangements for the use of these resources within school. Each Family usually combined its funding in order to secure value for money and to facilitate inclusive arrangements.

AFN resources were treated as devolved expenditure.

- *Family Network Funding (FNF) of £1.117m.*

This was meant to simplify the additional funding available for a range of responses to SEND, and could be used to address the following:

- SEN training and development
- management and co-ordination time for the Family SENCO (equivalent to 18 half days)
- providing support for pupils with complex needs in mainstream settings during transition

- enhancing the role of the Family SENCO and developing their family networks, including:
  - funding increased Family SENCO time
  - development of cluster networks
  - training events
  - development of a Lead SEND Teacher role
  - contingency element for unpredicted admissions and changes in need

### **Arrangements for the recovery or carry-forward of unspent funds**

Arrangements relating to funds that remained unspent at the end of 2014-15 were described in the document *SEND Funding Guidance April 2014*, a copy of which was made available to all schools and Families of schools. These arrangements were as follows:

*'Net underspends (AFN and FNF) which remain on a Family cost centre at the end of the financial year will **not** automatically be carried forward to the next financial year. The local authority will instead recover any unspent allocations, which will be incorporated into the overall SEND funding quantum for the next financial year and will therefore be used as appropriate to address the needs of pupils with SEND across the county.'*

*However, if a family feels that it has relevant reasons that might necessitate an exceptional carry-forward of surplus funds into the next financial year, it will need to write to the Business Support Team (SEND Policy and Provision) at County Hall. The Group Manager, SEND Policy and Provision, will review each request in order to decide whether an exceptional carry-forward of surplus contingency is appropriate.'*

The above arrangements, which have been in place since April 2011, therefore allowed individual Families to request that all or part of their unspent funds be carried-forward into the following financial year.

### **Unspent funds 2014-15**

At the end of the 2014-15 financial year, £342,210 of AFN and FNF money remained unspent by Families of schools. This represented 4.34% of the total overall budget and comprised the following:

1. £178,380 relating to carry-forwards requested by Families for reasons including training costs, contingencies for highly mobile school populations and schools and families whose financial years ran September to August rather than April to March. This amount equated to 2.24% of the total AFN and FNF funding available to Families during 2014-15, and is available for the relevant Families of schools to allocate during 2015-16.
2. A further £163,380 representing transactions which were requested during 2014-15 but were not processed before the year-end deadline in early February 15. These were subsequently processed at the start of the 2015-16 financial year. This amount equated to 2.05% of the total AFN and FNF funding available to Families during 2014-15.

## Criteria for carrying forward unspent funds

The criteria shown below are normally applied when families submit requests to carry forward funding into the following financial year:

Requests to carry forward AFN and FNF funds into the next financial year will be approved where the family is able to demonstrate that:

- Families are aware that pupils will be moving into their area for whom family funding will be required;
- a contingency needs to be retained for cases where the outcomes of requests for HLN funding are not known. In the event that bids for funding to the HLN Panel are unsuccessful, the contingency will be needed to allocate AFN funding;
- Families are further developing roles within the Family such as the Family SENCO role. This may need funding to pump prime such developments for which it is not possible to make payments until the new financial year
- Expenditure has clearly been committed which cannot be paid until the new financial year

In the 2014/15 financial year, 10 families requested a carry forward of funding which met the above criteria and were approved.

A summary of the reasons for the requests is given below:

- The family had submitted an HLN resubmission bid and requested a carry forward in case the HLN bid was turned down, which would allow the family to allocate this funding for the remainder of the academic year. The family runs its AFN budget from September to September and therefore would have no money to allocate if this bid was turned down.

The family pointed out that if the HLN bid was successful, the funding would be reallocated against 3 pupils who have had to have reduced funding due to the HLN bid

- The family was in the process of employing a dyslexia specialist and required a carry forward of funding to be able to support the project following completion of the recruitment process
- The family required a carry forward to fund some complex Early Years pupils that were due to transfer to the family and for a number of high profile pupils who were very challenging at the end of last term. The family was awaiting paper work etc and wanted to ensure that sufficient funding would be available to include the pupils, all of whom had ASD

The FNF allocation operates from Sept to Sept and the following expenditure had been approved and required payment in the new financial year as the Family SENCO salary and budget was currently in the process of moving to Newark Academy:

PASS - £15,000; Numicon training and resources - £10,000; TA Training Conference - £3000; Various Training ASD, Switch on, MAPA, etc - £5000; Forest Schools Training - £5000; Resources - £2,542'

- The family budget had been earmarked for the following spends in the academic year:

- Early Years and ASD Family training day
  - Positive behaviour management training – NQTs and new staff
  - Differentiation training – NQTs and new staff
  - Dyslexia training – NQTs and new staff
  - NUMICON Training – TA network
  - Person centred review and planning training – SENCoS
  - Forest School Training – Holgate Primary staff member'
- The family requested a carry forward to assist with funding of the Family SenCo role
  - A new Academy formed part of the Family and wished to submit a number of requests, also the Family was aware of two new LAC students with very complex needs who the Family would need to support
  - The family was moving towards funding pupils for an academic year rather than a financial year and wanted to retain a contingency to cover the summer term during this interim transition period'
  - The family had committed expenditure for training, a contribution to Family SENCo costs in 2015-2016 and funding for new pupils joining the family

Overall, 2.24% of the total AFN and FNF funding allocated to families of schools in 2014/15 (£7.883 million) related to requests for carry-forward of funds.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Schools Forum:

- 1) notes the content of this report.

### **For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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