

Lancashire Schools Forum: Annual Report 2012/13 Headlines April 2012 - March 2013

Schools Budget 2013/14

2013/14 was the first year of the Government's new school funding reforms. These reforms introduced a national school funding framework that had a significant impact on arrangements in Lancashire.

The Forum was involved in responding to the DfE's initial consultations on the proposals and then in steering the development of Lancashire's formula, which included consulting Lancashire schools and academies on issues where local discretion was available.

The Schools Budget calculations revealed that an additional £10.5m would be available for Lancashire pupils in 2013/14. This additional funding came about for a number of reasons, including a growth in pupil numbers in schools and early years providers and savings identified in the Central Items Budget. The Forum agreed to the distribution of this 'headroom' equitably across all phases in Lancashire, which included:

- For primary and secondary schools and academies the basic pupil element was uplifted by 2.2%, which represents an increase of £60.13 for primary and £86.74 for secondary.
- In special schools the Weighted Pupil Number (WPN) funding rate will increase by £232.41 to give £3,980.39 per WPN, an increase of 6.2%.
- For secondary age pupils and post 16 students the WPN has been increased by £351.65 so that all providers will receive the same £3,980.39 level of WPN funding, an increase of 9.7%.
- In early years settings, the base rates for the Early Years Single Funding Formula have been increased by 2.2% equating to £0.09 per hour and transitional protection has been provided for one year for settings providing the 2 year old offer that were previously grant funded

In addition to the headroom, a further £9m of funding will be distributed to schools and academies in Lancashire from April 2013 from resources that were previously held centrally. The central items budget for 2013/14 stands at just over £36m. This compares to a figure of £80m in 2009/10.

Delegated Budgets for Short Stay Schools

Short Stay Schools received delegated budgets for the first time from 1 April 2013. The Forum helped shape the short stay school formula, ensuring transitional protection with the provision an opening balance of £20,000 per school from 'headroom'.

Schools' Views Count

The Forum has for a number of years been concerned about the response rate from schools to funding consultations, which have been as low as 5 returns. The Forum therefore agreed to fund an arrangement where one to one briefing sessions were

offered to all schools and academies with the Schools Financial Services Team (SFS) using a bespoke briefing paper for each school and academy which highlighted the potential impact of the draft formula funding proposals, based on the individual characteristics of the school. This facilitated a higher response rate to the important consultation on the new school funding formula; at the same time as raising understanding of the impact with headteachers and governors.

The total number of responses to the consultation was 511. Of these 504 were from primary and secondary schools and academies representing an 89% response rate from these sectors.

This level of response enabled the Forum to make decisions and recommendations on the schools budget with the confidence that they were aware of the views across a significant majority of Lancashire schools and academies.

This was particularly important around the options for the de-delegation of certain services in the primary and secondary phase. The new school funding regulations allow the primary and secondary school members on the Forum to decide on the proposed de-delegations by phase and these decisions are binding on all schools in that phase. Being aware of the schools views was vital in shaping the decisions taken by the Forum. The de-delegation decisions taken by primary and secondary members of the Forum were all in accordance with the views expressed by a majority of schools in the consultation process.

Lancashire Improving Futures Programme

The Lancashire Improving Futures Programme is a multi-agency programme fundamentally changing the way the county council works with families to support them to support their children.

Through savings obtained in the central items budget, the Forum was able contribute funding to a number of important Improving Futures schemes, including:

- **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)**
This will enable MASH support to be provided by the appointment of two officers who will act as the Schools presence in the MASH. They will develop systems, procedures and path-ways as appropriate as part of a multi-agency team between the MASH and Schools and assist Schools in managing any requests for information from the MASH.
- **Domestic Abuse Services**
Lancashire has experienced a significant increase in referrals to statutory agencies for Domestic Abuse. A multi-agency investment is currently being developed to enhance services available and ensure consistency of response across the County. Pupils in schools are affected by Domestic Abuse and incidents occur amongst the 16-25 age group.
- **Social workers in secondary schools**
This project will build on an initial pilot and provide match funding to place social workers in secondary schools to undertake the full range of social work arising from that school from early support through to child protection and care proceedings.

- **Health, Wellbeing and Lifeskills Programme**
To develop curriculum resources that could be used across Lancashire to help children and young people with lifeskills, health and personal and relationships education. This would be through the development of a comprehensive Lancashire on line and teaching resource programme that would be available to schools, parents and children and young people. The additional resourcing was to work alongside county and health resources that are already allocated to this type of work but to develop a professional support team to aid in the de-livery and implementation over the next few years.

School Balances and Clawback

School balances in 2011/12 increased by £4.632m. However, £2.735m of this related to the 'one off' unprecedented, level of interest earned on school balances. Clawback for 2011/12 was applied to 54 schools in June 2012 totalling £350k.

The Forum agreed that the clawback arrangements for 2012/13 should remain unchanged from those applied in 2011/12, with clawback rates to apply at 31 March 2013 set at:

- 0% on balances up to 1.5 times the guideline
- 50% to be applied to balances more than 1.5 times the guideline balance;

The Forum is also aware that more rigorous monitoring of Section 251 Outturn data, including school balances, has been introduced by DfE this year. Members of the Forum supported a response sent to DfE in connection with enquiries made following the latest outturn report. However, with DfE challenging the level of balances against published criteria it is clear that there is a renewed focus on school balances nationally, particularly as the current pressures on public finances are expected to continue for a number of years. The Forum and County Council will need to review the local school balances and clawback arrangements to ensure that Lancashire remains below the DfE radar on this issue.

Delegation of funding to support Lancashire's participation in DfE National Exclusion Trial

Support was provided by the Forum to aid Lancashire's involvement in the DfE National Exclusion Trial by providing appropriate funding from its Invest to Save fund established from savings in the 2011/12 central items budget. This will allow the county to participate in a two year trial of alternative provision, which will enable best practice to be identified and disseminated.

Forum Membership

The membership of the Schools Forum continues to evolve to reflect the changing pupil population in Lancashire, most significantly in 2012/13 with an increase in academy representatives from 2 to 4.