

**REPORT TO:** Schools Forum

**DATE:** 21 January 2014

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Divisional Manager Post 16 Development & 14-19 Entitlement Strand

**SUBJECT:** High Needs Students Assessment Framework Support

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 **To inform School Forum of:**

- **The implementation of the High Needs Students (HNS) Assessment Framework and its success in managing applications from Post 16 institutions.**
- **The use of support to implement the HNS Assessment Framework.**

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That School Forum agree to fund from the High Needs budget additional support to implement the High Needs assessment process up to £14,000.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In April 2013 Halton Local Authority introduced the High Needs Students Assessment Framework in response to each local authority becoming responsible for managing the funding for education support for high needs students aged 0-25, as outlined in the document School funding reform: Next Steps towards a fairer system, published on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

3.2 The post 16 element of the Assessment Framework has been managed by the 14-19 (post 16 entitlement) Division. Through this assessment framework a total of 91 applications were received for high needs funding for Post 16 students from colleges and Independent Specialist Providers. These were processed through an assessment panel in summer 2013 and; providers were informed of funding decisions by July 2013.

3.3 By applying the rigour of the HNS Assessment Framework the current costs for Post 16 High Needs provision is approximately £850,000 compared to a budget previously funded by the Education Funding Agency of £1,240,000 in the 2011/2012 financial year.

3.4 The process of managing this significant change in post-16 provision and funding has required support from the administration,

commissioning and 14-19 team. However, due to the volume of work, the number of meetings and the detailed assessment process there is insufficient capacity across these teams to continue to support the process. This is likely to have a major impact on our ability to review and assess any further applications and could lead to a delay in funding for establishments and support to vulnerable young people.

3.5 The current position of 2013/14 applications is:

- Contracts and individual place agreements issued to 9 providers for 73 students, 3 contract and 19 individual place agreements have not been signed or returned to date.
- Outstanding queries on 1 application before a contract can be issued
- 74 Monitoring forms will be due in January 2014

3.6 To manage the applications received and ensure there is an auditable trail the following tasks are outstanding:

- Chase all outstanding contracts and individual place agreements.
- Revise and amalgamate all current documentation and electronic records to ensure one effective electronic file store system for all applications and supporting documentation, that includes log of queries and outcomes.

3.7 To implement an element of the quality assurance process the following tasks will require action from January 2014:

- Scrutinise all Monitoring forms received from institutions and use knowledge and expertise to judge if evidence of progress made by students is apparent, follow up all queries.
- Record all outcomes of the scrutiny, queries and actions.

3.8 It is essential to carry out this scrutiny to ensure provision is being monitored against the contract and costs are still appropriate.

3.9 To enhance data and information sharing between departments the following tasks will require action:

- Identify the data fields required for development within the LA SEN database.
- Record Post 16 placement details onto the database.

3.10 To prepare for the 2014/15 applications the following tasks will require action:

- Amend High Needs Assessment Framework following

evaluation feedback received

- Develop a timeline for the delivery of the Assessment Framework for 2014/15 and inform education institutions
- Report to School Forum on the experience of the process for 2013/14 and any proposed changes for 2014/15 at the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2014 meeting.

3.11

Once the 2014/15 process has been agreed there will then be the workload associated with the implementation of the Assessment Framework and the process of managing applications and Commissioning Panel meetings.

3.12

To manage the additional workload it is proposed that the High Needs budget support the costs of additional staffing up to a maximum budget of £14,000. This will allow additional support up to August 2014. The level of support required beyond August will be reviewed as part of the work undertaken to respond to the Children and Families Bill.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The High Needs Assessment Framework sets out the process by which applications from Further Education Colleges and Independent Specialist Providers will be assessed and funding agreed. Managing applications is essential to ensure a robust and auditable process is followed.

#### 5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

#### 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Supports key priorities to ensure that Children and Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities access appropriate education opportunities.

##### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Providing additional capacity to ensure the work of the team to continue to reduce the number of vulnerable young people Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) can progress.

##### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Provide the capacity to continue to further reduce NEET, young people in NEET are at a higher risk of ill health.

#### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Young people who are NEET are more likely to be involved in criminal activity.

#### 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

With the significant investment in Urban Renewal project in Halton partnerships are ensuring that employment, learning and skills opportunities are written into key performance indicators within all new development contracts. Linking through the Employment, Learning and Skills Strategic Partnership opportunities for pathways from education, including Alternative Provision, into employment opportunities can be identified in addition to opportunities for employer mentoring.

#### 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 If additional support is not provided the provision of appropriate placements for the most vulnerable post-16 learners will be delayed. This will also impact on the funding of the providers.

7.2 The capacity to scrutinise the Monitoring forms is an essential element of managing contract compliance and ensuring value for money from providers.

#### 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Halton Borough Council has a statutory duty to secure that it makes available to young people aged 13-19 and to those aged 20-24 with a Learning Difficulty Assessment support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training.

#### 9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.