

REPORT TO: Schools Forum

DATE: 16 March 2015

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 £18,000 for financial year 2015/16.**

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 26th 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 in 2013/14 and 101 applications were received in 2014/15 for high needs funding for Post 16 students from colleges and Independent Specialist Providers. These were evaluated through assessment panels.

3.3 By applying the rigour of the HNS Assessment Framework the costs for Post 16 High Needs provision in 2013/14 was £850,000 and despite more applications being received in 2014/15 the forecast is £850,554. This has been achieved through challenging providers on their identified costs. The budget previously funded by the Education

Funding Agency was £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 without additional support. In March 2014 School Forum agreed to fund a High Need Support Officer, at a cost of £14,000. This was the necessary sum to cover an 8 month period of support, until it was better understood how Education Health and Care Plans would impact on the high needs funding process.

3.5 Since we have had support in place this had led to better scrutiny of applications and challenging providers to ensure fair costs across all students, as seen in reduced costs. Joint commissioning across education, health and social care with contributions of £37,594 from social care and £27,190 from health has also been achieved. Appropriate contract management arrangements in place for the 89 agreed placements have also included scrutiny part way through courses.

3.6 The current position of 2014/15 applications is:

- Contracts and individual place agreements issued to 11 providers for 89 students, 2 contract and 8 individual place agreements have not been signed or returned to date.
- Outstanding queries on 8 applications before an individual place agreements can be issued
- 89 Monitoring forms will be due in Spring 2015.

3.7 To implement the quality assurance process the following tasks will require action from January 2015:

- Adapt Quality Assurance Framework used in SEN pre 16 to ensure quality of placements
- Attend all individual student Review Meetings.
- Ensure all appropriate documentation is received for each individual student.
- 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.

The High Needs Assessment Framework will be required for 2015/16 to process all applications for High Needs Funding for students with a Learning Difficulty Assessment who have not yet transferred to an

Education Health and Care Plan. Therefore the resource still required is £18,000 to support the process throughout the financial year. There will be less applications than in 2014/15 but the funding has increased from 2014/15 so support can be in place for the full financial year.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The High Needs Assessment Framework sets out the process by which applications from Further Education, Sixth Form 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**

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 SEND 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.

Ensuring the development of employability skills as a key outcome for many young people will ensure they can achieve their ambition of gaining employment.

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.