

**REPORT TO:** Schools Forum

**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Divisional Manager – Inclusion 0-25

**SUBJECT:** Delegated Top Up Funding (DTUF)

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To make proposals to Schools Forum regarding the reform of the use DTUF in order to support schools.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 2.1 DTUF Funding is moved into line with other provision and placement decisions through Halton's EHCP Partnership Panel (option A below).

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 DTUF was set up as a means of providing schools with High Needs funding for children at risk of exclusion. It was later extended to include children with medical needs but no learning needs.
- 3.2 The intention was that the panel would consist of Heads, Deputy Heads and SENCOs. They were offered admin support and general advice and support from LA. LA admin receive the applications, send out paperwork to panel members, minute meetings, send out decision letters. LA Inclusion officers offer support with decision making and process any funding payments. Panel members/chair names were not shared with schools.
- 3.3 Over time, on reflection, panel members have not been able to prioritise attendance at panels. In order to progress, panels have increasingly relied on LA officers to arrange panel dates and respond to queries from schools. Since February 2021 attempts have been made to establish quorate DTUF panels at least half termly and due to non-attendance none of the panels has been able to progress as intended. Panel members do not all attend panels regularly. Schools making applications contact LA personnel to challenge decisions, complain etc.
- 3.4 In order to ensure that funding requests can be assessed the current practice in light of panels not sitting a number of options are now available:

- 3.5 **Option A:** is for DTUF applications to be heard as part of Halton's EHCP Partnership Panel. The Partnership panel is Halton's moderation and advisory panel regarding decisions to approve EHCP needs assessments; agreeing to issue draft EHCPs; and agreeing specialist placements. The panel is already a multi-agency panel, however, in light of the recent DfE Green Paper the Partnership Panel will need some school representation moving forward.
- 3.6 **Option B:** The originally intended system should be better supported. This would call for a new round of nominations to be sought from primary and secondary heads associations; for panel members to agree panel dates, send to admin staff for distribution to all schools.
- Panel chair should be responsible for monitoring attendance of panel members and recruiting new panel members when necessary.
  - Panel membership/chair names to be shared with schools and all queries/challenges/complaints directed to the panel chair.
  - Decision letters sent out by the chair should describe to schools appeal routes
  - Halton LA to continue to process agreed payments and provide officer support on request of the chair.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 DTUF has been and will continue to be funded as part of DSG High Needs top-up funding. There is no additional budget requirement accompanying these proposed process changes.

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

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

It is essential that schools and education support services receive sufficient funding to allow them to support all children and young people.

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

None.

##### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

None.

##### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

##### **5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

#### **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 6.1 It is evident that the major pressure on the High Needs Block are the costs of Out of Borough provision. Ensuring that schools have funding to

support early intervention is part of a broader strategy in reducing Halton's reliance on out of borough independent provision. The proportion of HNB used for DTUF will need to be regularly monitored to ensure that it is fairly and appropriately distributed.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 7.1 The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings.