

REPORT TO SEND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Title:	Banding Descriptors Review
Report by:	Gary Bloom, Head of SEND
Meeting Date:	7th January 2022

1. Summary of progress and actions since last period

Background – Historic Position

All high needs top up funding is currently determined by the Multi Agency EHCP Panel, consisting of practitioners across the SEND partnership. Decisions taken involve allocating funding equivalent to a number of hours of Learning Support Assistant funding in mainstream schools and one of 3 bands for each special school or resource base. For historical reasons, the bands for each of these settings is different even though some of the pupils admitted have the same needs. There is no published guidance for panel to determine how much to allocate for each pupil, this is done based on the discussion and the professional experience of the panel. In order to provide a consistent way of identifying the needs of pupils with SEN and provide a fair and equitable distribution of resources to support the provision required to meet those needs.

Banding descriptors have been developed and trialed at panel for an extended period. The Banding Scheme for Southend has been designed to mirror the decisions the EHCP Multi Agency Panel are currently making. The scheme looked at what combination of needs leads to a specific allocation of hours of funding in mainstream schools or a specific band within Southend special schools and replicated those decisions into the proposed bands.

The proposed bands are baselined against either the most frequently allocated number of hours allocated by panel or the average special school banding rate. This will allow bands to be inflated each year where the budget allows in line with current practice. It is important to acknowledge that the proposed scheme is providing clarity and structure to the way resources are currently allocated it is not fundamentally reviewing the way resources are allocated simply providing a transparent methodology recognising the ultimate decision continues to rest with the EHCP Multi Agency Panel.

The proposal has been consulted upon with settings, particularly special schools who remain most affected by the proposal as all pupils attending a special school have an EHCP and therefore will be in receipt of top up funding. The proposal has been agreed by both Vulnerable Learners Sub-Group and Resources Sub-Group.

Fundamentally the impact for schools will be minimal in that they will continue to receive element 3 high needs top up for pupils with EHCPs, the only change is the methodology used to calculate the amount of top up allocated.

Allocation of High Needs Top Up for pupils attending schools from September 21

From the beginning of the Autumn Term 2021 all High Needs Top up funding (sometimes referred to as Element 3 funding) for pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) will be determined by the EHCP Multi Agency Panel supported by a new banding descriptors matrix. As a result, funding will be allocated in line with the ten funding bands agreed by the Southend Education Board at the meeting in June 2021. The Banding descriptors grid should be used when an EHC Needs Assessment has taken place and it has been agreed that it is appropriate to issue an EHCP. The banding descriptors grid will support the Panel to determine the level of top up funding to be allocated recognising the setting the child or young person is placed in. Recognising the uniqueness of every child the ultimate decision rests with the Panel but the banding descriptors grid has been designed to mirror the decisions taken by the panel over a period of time.

Using the Banding Descriptors

For each of the DfE categories of need listed in the SEN Code of Practice five **levels** are identified. Each of those levels describe a range of needs that may be prevalent in a child or young person.

The levels are categorised from level 0 to level 4.

Level 0 describes how a typically developing child with universal needs would typically present.

Level 1 describes how a child with additional educational needs usually but not exclusively met at SEN Support with an Individual Support Plan might present.

Levels 2- 4 describe how a child with special education needs may present with increasing severity with level 4 being the most severe within that category of need.

When banding a child or young person a description of their needs should be mapped to the grid using a **best fit** methodology, so where multiple descriptors are listed within a particular level the level that **best** describes the child or young person should be selected.

Each of the levels on the banding descriptors grid are weighted to reflect the level of resourcing required at each level. Once all levels are determined the spreadsheet will suggest an overall **Band**. The setting in which the pupil is placed will affect the band proposed, because the Education Board agreed some nuances to ensure special school funding was in line with current agreements. Remember this amount is the top up (element 3) funding and not the element 1 and 2 funding which remains the schools responsibility for funding from their delegated budget.

The band generated by the grid can be overwritten by the EHC Multi Agency Panel where the panel acknowledge the individual circumstances relating to the placement.

Where this option is used the reason should be recorded and this intelligence will be used to refine the banding descriptors grid where necessary.

If it is felt that the allocation of the highest band (Band 10) is not sufficient top up funding to meet need, an additional amount can be requested. All allocations in excess of Band 10 must be approved by the Head of SEND.

Implementing the new arrangements

All mainstream pupils were converted to the nearest band (we rounded up where pupils were between bands) to ensure that all schools received the same or more money for the same group of pupils as they would have done under the previous scheme. For special schools previously there were two or three agreed bands for each individual special school, the calculation of these bands were historic and had been inflated annually. The bands were different for each of the special schools even though they might be admitting pupils with similar needs. We worked with the schools to re-band all pupils to each of the 10 new bands, some pupils were banded higher than the previous band allocated and some lower but as a result of the exercise each special schools received a reasonable amount of additional funding for the same cohort of pupils and inflation was added. This was Education Board's way of ensuring that additional funding was placed in our special schools to recognise the valuable role they play. Therefore, for parents the banding should make no difference to the provision for their child or young person which remains clearly specified in their EHCP. The accumulation of banded pupils creates a budget for the special school (which has increased due to the new arrangements) The special school uses that budget to make provision for all pupils on roll in line with their individual EHCPs.

Banding Rates and equivalence 21/22

Band	20/21	21/22 2% increase from Sept 21	Equivalent to
1	£1,289	£1,315	15 hrs LSA support or equivalent in mainstream
2	£2,504	£2,554	17.5 hrs LSA support or equivalent in mainstream
3	£3,719	£3,793	20 hrs LSA support or equivalent in mainstream
4	£6,149	£6,272	25 hrs LSA support or equivalent in mainstream
5	£7,183	£7,327	Average special school Band 2 top up rate
6	£8,578	£8,750	30 hrs LSA support or equivalent in mainstream
7	£9,793	£9,989	32.5 LSA support or equivalent in mainstream
8	£11,043	£11,264	Average Special School Band 1 top up rate
9	£11,980	£12,220	37 hrs LSA support or equivalent in mainstream
10	£15,283	£15,589	Highest Special School top up for pupils with challenging behaviour or profound and multiple learning needs.

2. Proposed priorities and activities for next period

Activity and outcome	By when
Monthly monitoring of banding decisions to review descriptors and impact of band drift	Ongoing
Agree banding rates for 22/23	June 22
3. Recommendations / Discussion / Decisions required from Partnership Board	
Board to note the arrangements for high needs top up funding	