

Consultation Questions

Towards a new formula - The school funding system, core principles and formula structure

1. Do you agree with the principles we are applying to the formula?

Agree a return to a formula distribution with the responsibility for Local Authorities to assess and meet the needs of individual schools. It would have been helpful to have more details of the effect of various changes at local authority level. Funding allocated for Deprivation does not take account of Cultural Deprivation and the indicators are all for financial deprivation. Cultural deprivation (as measured perhaps by % of families which have experienced Higher Education) also gives rise to different levels of challenge and support needed in schools.

2. Do you agree with the proposals to mainstream the grants specified into DSG?

Agree with mainstreaming grants, which will allow decisions to be made locally through own funding formula.

3. Do you agree with the proposed elements of the formula?

Agree with the proposed elements. Early Years block clearly defined.

The Basic Entitlement - Options for determining the basic unit of funding

4. Which methodology for calculating the basic entitlement do you consider would enable the fairest and most practical distribution of funding?

The basic entitlement gives a clear understanding of its purpose; however fails to use an activity led formula and based on historic patterns of expenditure. Not robust evidence to justify differences in total funding between authorities.

Additional Educational Needs – Distributing additional funding for pupils with additional educational needs

5. Do you agree with the proposed methodology for distributing money for additional educational needs?

Difficult to form a view however, too high % directed at the under performing groups which does not take account of the largest underperforming group – white working class boys.

6. Which is your preferred indicator for distributing money via deprivation? Why?

Funding should support raising educational achievement and ensuring every pupil reaches their potential. Failure to reach such potential strongly related with social deprivation. However categorising children from socially deprived backgrounds as under-attaining is inaccurate and unsupportive. Many pupils from these backgrounds do attain their potential.

IDACI preferred indicator but would like to reiterate that not all additional educational needs are correlated with social deprivation and therefore would welcome a wider range of indicators, to include cultural. Assurances would be needed that the Post Code information was accurate and took account of rural areas and new areas of developments.

Do not agree with the use of FSM as not sensitive to the pupils that are not quite eligible or who do not claim their meal.

7. Do you agree with the indicators, other than for deprivation, that we have proposed for each need?

Agree that they are valid indicators. Incidences of low attainment in the authority appear to be a very good proxy indicator. Underperforming groups should be widened and pick up – white working class boys

8. Will the Local Pupil Premium mechanism help funding to be more responsive to changes in pupil characteristics?

Agree, if left to manage locally, not a national pupil premium.

9. Is it right that local authorities should each develop their own pupil premium mechanism?

Local authority formula already allocates funding on the basis of the overall social deprivation of pupils in schools and should be left to develop its own pupil premium mechanism. Schools are given money in proportion to the general level of need and not attached to individual pupils, schools can use this money flexibly and is aware if how much is available.

High Cost Pupils – Distributing additional funding for high cost pupils, including those with high cost special educational needs

10. Do you agree with the methodology for distributing money for High Cost Pupils?

Methodology appear reasonable however, must ensure sufficient directed at the flat rate as a weak association with deprivation at local authority level. Welcome the measure of Cognition and Learning (Not achieving level 2 at Key Stage 2)

Sparsity - Reflecting the additional costs of small primary schools in sparsely populated areas

11. Do you agree that the school census and Middle Super Output Area are the right data source and geography to use to assess the sparsity of an area?

Agree

12. Which method for calculating the sparsity factor do you think will best enable additional funding to reach those local authorities that need to maintain small schools – the broad or narrow option?

Narrow option targeting funding at the most sparsely populated.

13. Do you agree that there should not be a secondary sparsity factor?

It is more expensive to run a school in rural areas. Transport costs in secondary schools is integral to the running of the education system, although recognised funding of which comes from a different part of the local authority budget. This needs to be considered, particularly school day transport costs.

Area Cost Adjustment – Reflecting labour costs in different areas

14. Which is the fairest method of applying the Area Cost Adjustment?

Out of the two options available would welcome the hybrid approach and not the use of a General Labour Market approach

Transitional Arrangements – Protecting schools and local authorities from significant fluctuations in funding

15. Do you support our plans for the transitional arrangements for mainstreaming grants?

Agree however they should not be over prescriptive.

16. Should floors be paid for by all local authorities or just the largest gaining authorities?

Changes in the distribution that are recognised as equitable may take a very unfair time to work through to the authorities with the recognised need. It is fairer to share the cost of the floors across all other authorities to ensure that those who stand to gain most in the end were those who were most unfairly treated before. Not sure this is clear. Those who stand to gain most will continue to be penalised if they do not receive the extra funding quickly.

17. Do you have any suggestions as to how the Minimum Funding Guarantee could be improved?

No works well and gives a sense of stability

Other considerations and conclusion – other issues and next steps

18. If a contingency arrangement for local authorities is to continue, funded from the DSG, what areas should it cover and what should the criteria be for triggering eligibility?

Yes to continue in principle, however amount withheld should be reviewed and commensurate to the amount spent in the previous financial year.

19. Do you support out proposals for Service children?

Yes, and should be in addition to funding through DSG