

Question 2 - Alternative Proposals

Do you agree that if there is additional funding available that for the first £848k, 55% will be added to the basic entitlement (per pupil funding) and 45% will be added back to the lump sum, with any additional funding over this amount being added to the basic entitlement. If there needs to be a reduction to funding rates that this is adjusted through the basic entitlement rate? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

West Berkshire resolved a difficult dilemma on funding high needs in 2016-17 by transferring £848k of funding away from schools. All schools funded £5k of this from their lump sum value and so I can see the logic and approach for the first £848k of additional funding and agree with the approach detailed for any additional funding.

However, the consultation details in paragraph 3.3 that this decision resulted in the funding rate per pupil in the school's block in 2017-18 dropping by £20 per pupil. This means a further transfer of £443k away from schools (based on 22,130 pupils) compounding the original £848k. I have two proposed alternatives.

The first proposal is designed to protect schools but gives some recognition to the fact that schools would have had £443k to absorb any reduction had it not been for the £848k transfer that was made for 2016-17. The proposal is that should there need to be any reduction in funding rates for schools in 2017-18 the reduction should not be adjusted through the basic entitlement rate unless the reduction exceeds £443k. The amount of any reduction in funding rates required over and above £443k should be adjusted through basic entitlement but the first £443k of any reduction is to be funded through the High Needs Block. School Forum still retains the option to move funds between blocks as the ring-fencing proposals have not been implemented for 2017-18. This proposal seeks to protect schools from further reductions in funding rates in 2017-18 in light of their cumulative contribution of £1.291m to solving the High Needs funding dilemma.

The second proposal is based on the fact that the decision to move the original £848k as agreed at School Forum was a decision to only move £848k it was not a decision or agreement to move £848k this year followed by a further £443k next year. Whilst the compounded loss of £443k is a consequence of the original decision, it is an unintended consequence and not one that must necessarily be suffered by schools. The proposal is that the intention of the original £848k transfer to be honoured and schools block recovers the £20 additional funding per pupil through a transfer £443k from High Needs that would and should otherwise have come to them in 2017-18 had the £848k transfer last year not been made and then any reduction to funding rates to be adjusted through the basic entitlement rate.