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# Vulnerable Children's Grant 2022-2023

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**Report being considered by:** Schools' Forum on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Report Author:** Nicola Ponton

**Item for:** Information **By:** All Forum Members

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 Review of Vulnerable Children's Fund 2022/2023

## 2. Recommendation

1.1 That Forum Members note the report.

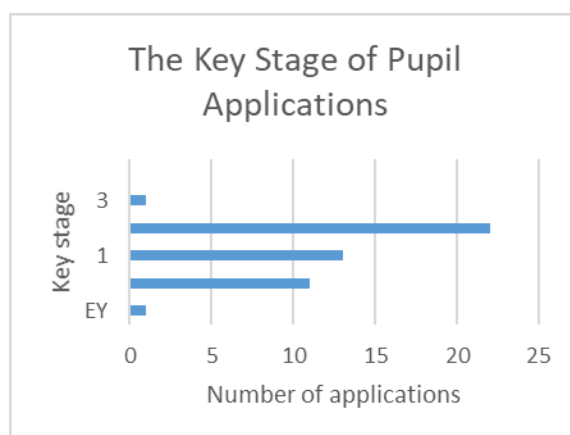
## 3. Introduction/Background

3.1 The Vulnerable Children's Grant (VCG) is a highly appreciated, relatively small fund, for schools who have unexpected additional financial pressures due to in-year admissions of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or for children whose needs suddenly change. It is specifically devised to promote social inclusion, reduce exclusions and reduce the pressure on SEN budgets by providing temporary funding.

## 4. Supporting Information

4.1 The VCG budget for 2021-2022 was £50,000

4.2 27 settings applied for VCG funding for 62 pupils. The vast majority of applications were received from primary schools, though one early years provider and one secondary school made successful applications.

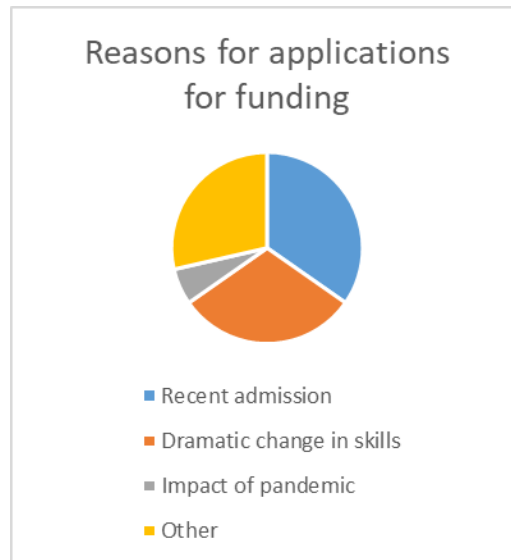


Most of the applications received were either for support for:

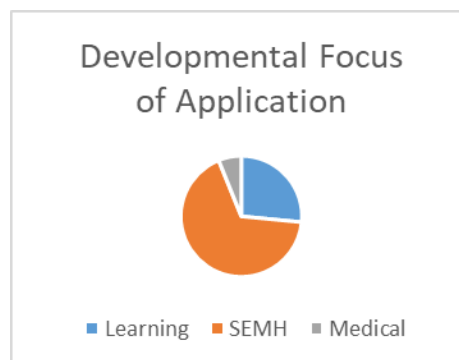
- Pupils who had arrived as an in-year admission
- A dramatic change in pupil need

- An 'other' reason, e.g. supporting extremely vulnerable children, children with significant and complex SEN

A few applications were to support pupils who had been adversely affected by the impact of the pandemic.

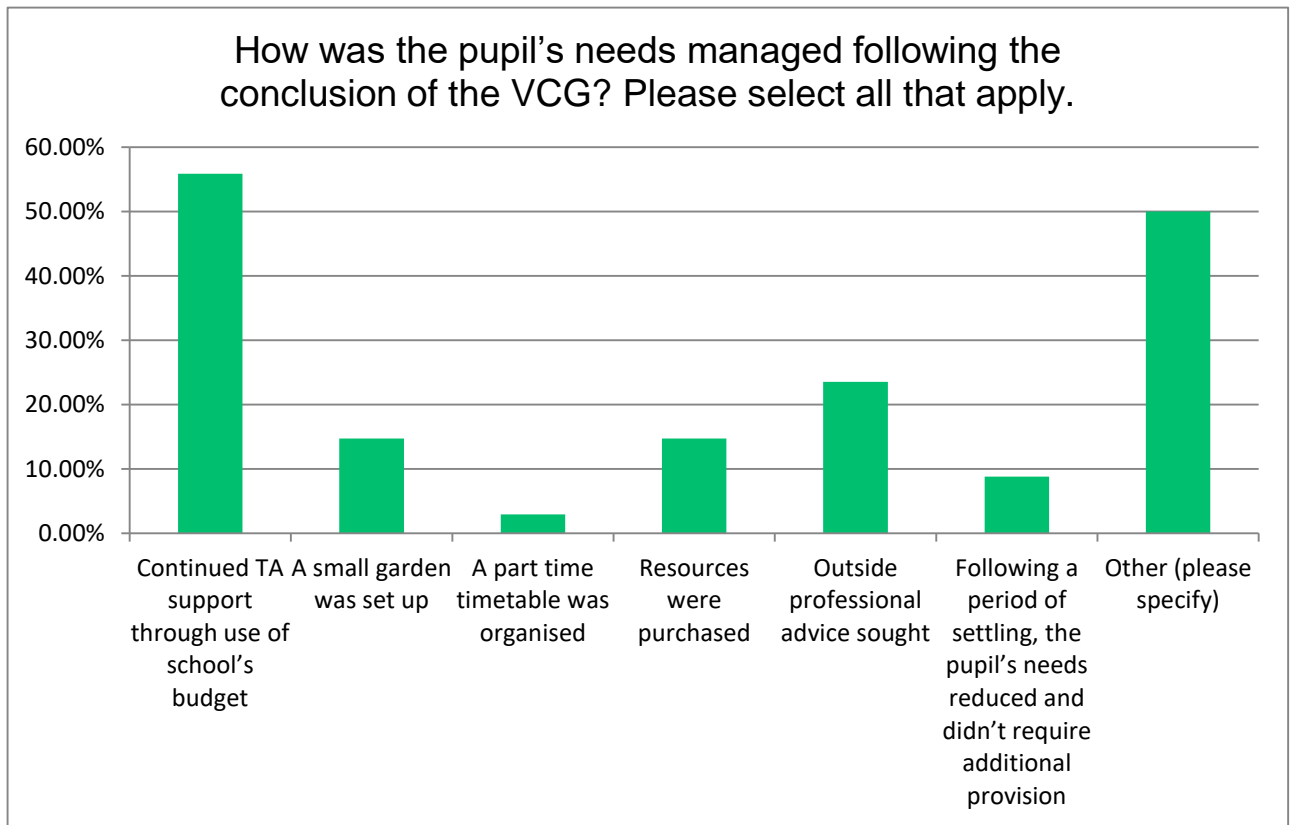


Most applications were to support a pupil's Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, with the remaining 26% requiring learning and 6% requiring support for their medical needs:

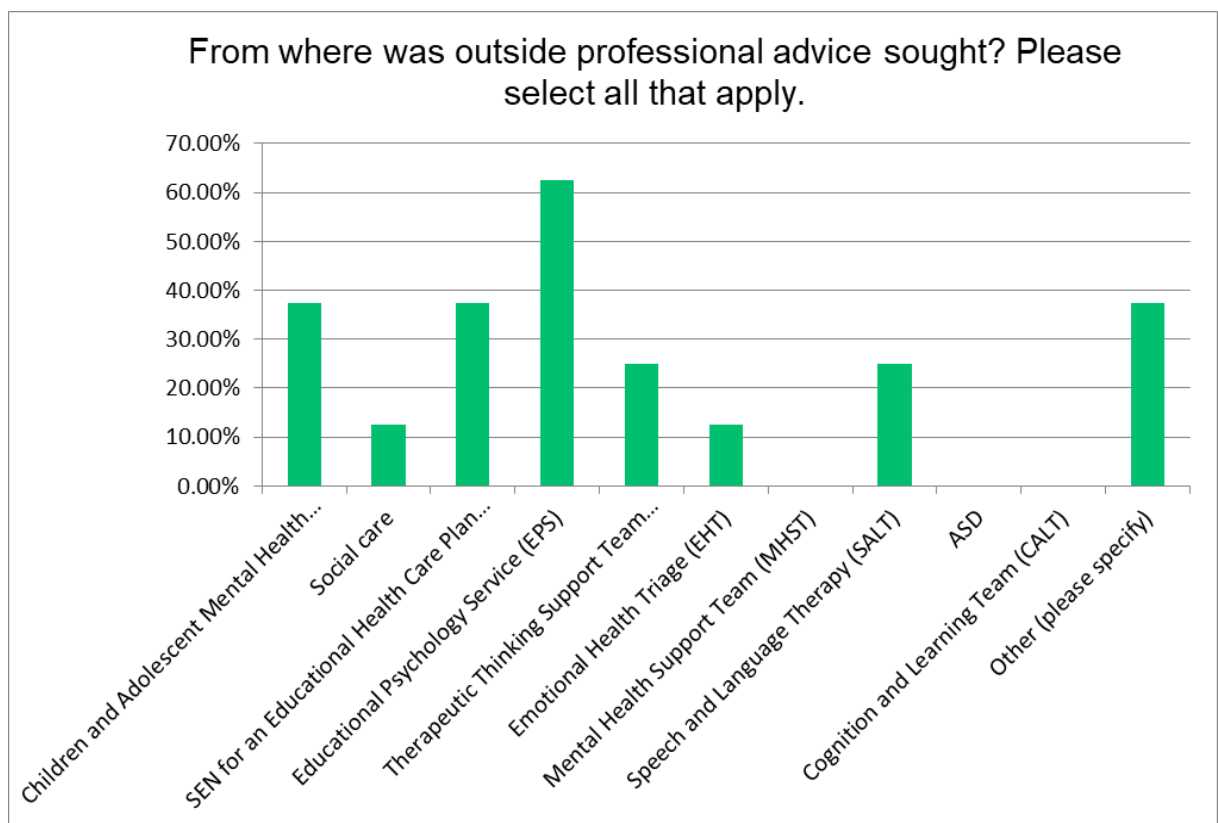


Most schools' applications requested funds to buy in TA support (69%) or agency involvement (20%). When schools were surveyed in May 2023, responses indicated that the TA support was predominantly used to support a pupil's SEMH needs and inclusion in school by providing additional support in class, or in a differentiated learning provision (a 'small garden'). As a result of this creative package, positives included; increased attendance, reduced suspensions, and children becoming more settled with staff learning to identify children's triggers/emotional needs.

Although 8% of pupils didn't require additional support after the conclusion of the VCG, the vast majority did. Schools often used their own budgets to continue to provide TA support, as well as supporting in other ways, e.g. purchasing resources. The VCG often helped schools gain evidence for an EHCP assessment and the subsequent EHCP meant they had the funding to continue the support.



The survey suggests that pupils in receipt of VCG had significant needs as Educational Psychology involvement was sought for 62% of pupils, and a CAMHS referral and EHCP assessment was requested for 37% of pupils.



Schools were clear that the VCG is an effective use of funds. 88% of pupils were said to have made a lot or some progress since receiving funding:

'The VCG has supported XX's relationships in school and her ability to interact with others. She is now happier and outbursts have reduced significantly. She is no longer at risk of exclusion.'

'He became more successful during the 3 hours a day he had support. What became apparent was that he then couldn't actually manage at all without the support, so we have had to employ an adult for him.'

Schools were grateful to receive funding as some of the quotes below illustrate:

'This is such a valuable fund of money. It allows us to put support in place instantly when the alternative would be reduction to a part-time timetable. We are very mindful that reducing children's hours is counterproductive in terms of them being school ready so are always grateful that this fund is in place.'

'The support has been invaluable and has provided much evidence required to support this child's need for an EHCP. The support has helped him make significant social progress.'

'Thank you! We reached out to various professionals and were denied support or the support was disappointing. We felt very alone. This money gave us the opportunity to look for support further afield which definitely helped us!'

'This money made a real difference to the safety of staff and pupils at our school.'

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The VCG aims to be fair, equitable and simple to request. Feedback from schools indicates that it is valued and has significant impact. If schools, particularly smaller primary schools, cannot access this support in the future it could lead to increased movement between schools, higher exclusion figures and increased pressure on the capacity of specialist support services.