



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 2nd September 2021

Schools Forum Role and Decision Making Powers

Report of Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Children's Services.

Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson, Lead Member for Children's Services.

Report Author Sue Aviston Head of School Organisation and Resources

Purpose of Report

To provide FACS with further information about the role of the Schools Forum, including its powers, consultative role and the impact of this in relation to School Funding in Northumberland for 2021/22.

Recommendations

FACS OSC are recommended to:

- 1) Note the content of the report.

Key issues

1. National Regulations govern the operation of schools forums. These were updated in 2020 by [The Schools Forum \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#) to allow schools forums to meet remotely. Prior to this, [The Schools Forums\(England\) Regulations 2012](#) had been the latest regulations published.
2. The Schools' Forum, generally has a consultative role, with final decisions being made by the Cabinet, or a senior officer and Cabinet member under delegated powers. The 2021/22 School Funding report brought to Cabinet on 12 January 2021 sought delegated powers for final decisions to be made on behalf of the Council by the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services and Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
3. Schools Forum usually meets 5 times a year. Historically meetings have been held at County Hall but the Covid-19 situation resulted in specific legislation being introduced to allow the Schools Forum to meet remotely via video conference since March 2020. Given Schools Forum membership ranges from Berwick to Kielder, this has proved popular, with members of forum and we are exploring how meetings can be facilitated to include remote access on an ongoing basis.
4. The Schools Forum also has 2 sub-committees. High Needs, which looks at specific issues in relation to the high needs block that is used to fund services and special, independent school and alternative provider places. The second committee is the Funding Formula committee which looks in detail and make recommendations to forum around the funding formula values to be adopted in Northumberland.
5. One of the key issues for consideration by Schools Forum has been the implementation of the National Funding Formula (NFF) in Northumberland. It should be remembered that the vast majority of formula values used by Northumberland for the distribution of School Funding for 2021/22 are in line with NFF Values as shown in the table at Appendix One.
6. While the Government have said that for 2021/22 school funding formula values will be still determined at individual local authority level, the move to a "hard" formula (i.e. where the formula values are centrally determined) could be effective from 2022/23. Where Northumberland values differ from NFF this is generally due to previous precedents, for example Northumberland has historically paid higher AWPU levels than those introduced in the NFF but will be unable to do so under a hard formula. It has therefore been necessary to move towards NFF values over the previous three years in order to manage a smooth transition to NFF and minimize the risk of significant changes to individual school budgets under the NFF.
7. The key points for consideration in relation to Funding Formula values for 2021/22 is therefore in relation to those NCC values that remain different to NFF rates.

These are:

- Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) – Primary;
- Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) – Secondary KS4;
- Primary Low Prior Attainment; and
- Free School Meals (Primary and Secondary)

The respective Northumberland (NCC) and National Funding Formula (NFF) values are shown below:

COMPARISON OF 2021/22 NORTHUMBERLAND (NCC) FORMULA VALUES TO NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA (NFF)				
Formula Value:	Stage	NCC Value	NFF Value	Difference
AWPU	Primary	3154	3123	31
AWPU	KS4	5064	4963	101
Low Prior Attainment	Primary	840	1095	-255
Free School Meals	Primary	570	460	110
Free School Meals	Secondary	570	460	110

- The Schools Forum has also been consulted on the work undertaken on the sparsity element within the NFF over the last couple of years. The sparsity element targets extra funding to schools that are both small and remote, using criteria based on the average year group size and the distance a pupil would have to travel to its nearest compatible school. Sparsity is a comparatively small element within the NFF, which in 2020/21 accounts for £42 million nationally of the total Schools Block Budget of £38,916 million but is important to Northumberland as a county due to its size and relatively high number of small rural schools.
- For 2020/21 we argued that the “as the crow flies” distances used to measure pupil distances was not appropriate and submitted a request that road distances were instead used in the distribution of sparsity funding, as this would have resulted in a further 6 schools being eligible.
- The overall funding received by Northumberland in relation to Sparsity has also increased significantly for 2021/22:
 - 2020/21 £1.883 million;
 - 2021/22 £2.602 million.
- While the ESFA have not yet adopted road distances measures, earlier in 2021 they have formally consulted on this for 2022/23 and we await the results of this consultation.
- Following the report submitted to Cabinet on 12 January 2021, the Schools

Budget Shares were prepared on the basis of this, shared with Schools Forum on 24 February 2021 and circulated to all Schools ahead of the 28 February 2021 deadline. FACS also requested a copy of the final allocation of funding to individual schools. A copy is attached at Appendix Two.

13. You will note that Appendix One also contains academies within Northumberland, even though they are funded directly by the ESFA. Academies are funded on the same principles as maintained Schools and using the same formula values, the key difference being that they operate on an academic year basis (Sept- Aug) rather than financial years (Apr -Mar).

De-delegation

14. The Schools Forum as a schools representative body take decisions on de-delegation on behalf of maintained schools. De-delegation is the process by which Schools Forum members, on behalf of maintained primary and secondary schools can decide collectively to “buy back” certain services, from a list of 20 possible services as allowed by the ESFA.
15. De-delegation is an integral part of the way in which these services are funded, and any changes would require a significant change to the way of working with schools. Schools Forum agreed to de-delegate from all phases during all years since 2013/14 when the de-delegation regime was first introduced. Cash values have been frozen at the same value per pupil as in 2020/21 for all de-delegated budgets, to support schools and their budgetary pressures. Over recent years, this has seen a fall in the overall funding available via de-delegation as the number of maintained schools decreases due to academisation. Academies are however able to access these services through buying in via a Service Level Agreement.
16. Historically five services have received a contribution via de-delegation, however it was agreed for 2021/22 that Behaviour Support Services is funded via the High Needs block, not de-delegation for 2021/22, as this is closely aligned to SEN services and in line with the new Northumberland Inclusive Education Services (NIES) offer, effective from September 2020, which has removed charges for the majority of SEN services (except Education Psychology) so that access is determined on the basis of need, not the ability to pay.
17. De-delegated funding was therefore formally requested and agreed by the relevant schools forum members in respect of the following 4 services:

Service	2021/22 Estimate (£)	Deduction per eligible pupil
Contingency Fund for School Restructure and Re-organisation costs	345,088	£20
Determination of FSM Eligibility	20,767	£6 per FSM pupil

English as an Additional Language (EAL) services	34,597	£220 per EAL pupil
Trades Union Facility Time	56,077	£3.25
TOTAL :	456,529	

18. One factor in maintained schools continuing support for de-delegation may be the decision made in Feb 2021 to return unspent balances to schools. Due to reduced amount of re-organisation activity in 2020/21, a paper was taken to Schools Forum in February 2021 to inform them that the Contingency Fund deduction was to be refunded to schools, this returned a total of £344,538.33 to maintained schools in March 2021, prior to the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

Additional Support to Schools from Northumberland County Council Covid Funding

19. Although not directly linked to the decisions of schools forum it is also worth mentioning the additional financial support given to schools which have faced exceptional expenditure pressures, as a result of the pandemic. 115 schools and academies have also received additional financial support from the Council's Covid Funding.
20. In order to make claim for funding schools had to satisfy a number of conditions to qualify for funding, e.g,
- the expenditure had to be necessarily incurred for the school to remain open;
 - the expenditure was not eligible to be recovered via an alternative funding source e.g the ESFA or insurance cover;
 - School were not holding balances in excess of 10% of their annual income;
21. This was to ensure support was targeted specifically at schools who had incurred unforeseeable additional costs arising from covid, and not simply a case of increasing school balances.
22. There were two separate claim programmes in respect of this, one relating to staffing costs and subsequently one for non-staff costs. Payments totaling £342,536 have been made to schools in respect of Staffing costs, and to date non-staff claims of £349,841 have been agreed.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	The decision of schools forum are made in line with national policy guidance relating to schools funding.
Finance and value for money:	The report sets out the funding values and process's undertaken to agree how revenue funding with be distributed to all schools and academies across Northumberland.
Legal:	Potential Changes in future as and when legislation governing the operation of Schools Forums changes
Procurement:	None.
Human Resources:	None
Property:	None
Equalities: (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	None
Risk Assessment:	The operation of the Forum will continue to be monitored to ensure it remains in line with ESFA guidance
Crime & Disorder:	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
Customer Considerations:	None
Carbon Reduction:	None.
Wards:	All.

CONSULTATION BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report sign off.

Finance Officer	Jan Willis
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Human Resources	n/a
Procurement	n/a
I.T.	n/a
Executive Director of Children's Services	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson

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FINAL NFF and NCC FORMULA FUNDING VALUES FOR 2021/22 (all values £)

FINAL 2021/22 NFF and NCC School Funding Formula Values					
Factor (all figures £)	NFF Values 2020/21	NCC Values 2020/21	NFF Values (As published July 2020) 2021/22	Final NCC Values 2021/22	Change in NCC Values 20/21 to 21/22 %
AWPU Primary	2,857	2,919	3,123	3,154	8.05%
KS3	4,018	4,018	4,404	4,404	9.61%
KS4	4,561	4,763	4,963	5,064	6.32%
Lump Sum Primary	114,400	114,400	117,800	117,800	2.97%
Middle	114,400	114,400	117,800	117,800	2.97%
High/Secondary	114,400	114,400	117,800	117,800	2.97%
Deprivation - Free School Meals Primary	450	510	460	570	11.76%
Secondary	450	510	460	570	11.76%
Deprivation – FSM6 Primary	560	560	575	575	2.68%
Secondary	815	815	840	840	3.07%
Deprivation – IDAC:					
Primary Band F	210	210	215	215	2.38%
Band E	250	250	260	260	4.00%
Band D	375	375	410	410	9.33%
Band C	405	405	445	445	9.88%
Band B	435	435	475	475	9.20%
Band A	600	600	620	620	3.33%
Secondary Band F	300	300	310	310	3.33%
Band E	405	405	415	415	2.47%
Band D	535	535	580	580	8.41%
Band C	580	580	630	630	8.62%
Band B	625	625	680	680	8.80%
Band A	840	840	865	865	2.98%
Low Attainment Primary	1,065	555	1,095	840	51.35%
Secondary	1,610	1,612	1,660	1,660	2.98%
EAL Primary	535	535	550	550	2.80%
Secondary	1,440	1,440	1,485	1,485	3.10%
Sparsity (max): Primary	26,000	26,000	45,000	45,000	73.08%
Middle	n/a	46,800	70,000	70,000	49.57%
Secondary/All Through	67,600	67,600	70,000	70,000	3.55%
Totals Adjusted by Capping and Scaling rates:					
Capping		4%		4.65%	
Scaling		50%		50%	
Minimum Funding Guarantee level	-	1%		2%	

SCHOOL BUDGET SHARES 2021-22 APPENDIX 2