

SCHOOLS FORUM

Allocation of Pupil Premium Grant

Purpose of Report

To advise on a revised method of distributing Pupil Premium Grant for Looked After Children effective from April 2016.

Suggested Action

The Forum is recommended to note the proposals for change (“How do we get there?” below) and contribute views on process and substance.

Summary

The report records an intention of reflecting more precisely the national guidance on the allocation of Pupil Premium Grant for Looked After Children. This means changes to a higher profile, more professional and less administrative role for the Virtual Headteacher (VHT), and the notion of targeted, equitable, but not necessarily equal funding. Use of PEPs for making resource judgements is suggested, with questions about implementing change and a possible core-and-margin model.

These decisions are for WBC Children’s Services and particularly the VHT. We wish to take views of Schools Forum as it is a matter of resource allocation, albeit statutorily placed with the VHT, and suggest a process in which she works with schools’ designated teachers to confirm an appropriate procedure.

Background

Changes to Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) for Looked After Children (LAC) were introduced through national guidance effective from 2014. Conditions of Grant specified associated requirements reflecting needs, differentiated inputs and impact. Key points include:

- VHTs continue to be responsible for making sure there are effective arrangements in place for allocating PPG funding to benefit LAC as described in their personal education plan (PEP).
- LAs may not carry forward funding held centrally into the next financial year. LA-held LACPPG that has not been spent, or allocated to the child’s education setting, by 31 March, will be recovered.
- The overall grant allocated to each LA is calculated on a data return made to the DfE on the number of children and young people who are looked after at a particular point in time. However, it does not have to be distributed on an even basis, given that children and young people in care have differing levels of need at different stages of being in care
- The grant must be managed by the Virtual School and used to improve outcomes and “narrow the gap” as identified in the Personal Education Plan [PEP] in consultation with the designated teacher.
- As a result, PEPs need to be monitored very closely by designated teachers, the Virtual School team, social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

Overall principles underpinning a needs driven model

- The VHT is statutorily responsible for the allocation and, at the LA level, the use of LACPPG to improve outcomes for all children in our care, wherever they live
- The funding will be provided according to the needs of the child and there is no requirement for a formula distribution or set amount
- None of the grant will be used to pay for Virtual School management or administration, but subject to agreement might be used for pooled activities likely to be around CPD or projects
- The council and the VHT are corporate parents, so the question 'would this be good enough for my child?' is a central one in making decisions and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of LACPPG.

How and why will the amount of LACPPG vary?

- Children's needs vary and can 'spike'
- For some children £1900 may not be sufficient to meet their additional needs e.g.:
 - Children who come into care in an emergency with a fragmented home and education history and who are behind academically
 - Children who have to move schools/move to another part of the country
 - Children where there is a significant and often delayed reaction to abuse and neglect, which manifests in hard to anticipate behavioural 'spikes'
- In view of this, there may be a significant difference in the amount of Pupil Premium Plus distributed for individuals.

How might resource allocation decisions be made?

- LACPPG is allocated termly or annually according to VHT policy decisions
- PEPs are commonly used by other LAs for this purpose, with some also having bidding processes
- Thus PEPs need to contain costed plans looking forward, and evaluate VFM retrospectively
- WBC will seek to avoid extra form-filling
- Some LAs front-load term 1 allocations
- Others guarantee minimum funding eg at 60% of the national allocation
- Pooled funding for directly relevant CPD or projects/action research are other activities referred to in the guidance
- LACPPG will not be used to replace other funds such as for SENs

How do we get there?

- It is proposed to take this forward under the Virtual School, led by Kathy Roberts and Jay Blundell. We have an existing framework for development and support in the form of the network of LAC Designated Teachers. As a vehicle for development this provides drive, hands-on experience and commitment to principles.
- Thorough that vehicle it is proposed to produce guidance and communications based on the ideas in this paper. Key points will be about the fitness-for-purpose of current PEPs, whether some kind of dry-run or semi-developed model operates in 2016-17, and the ultimate balance of core guarantee and needs-led funding.