

ECC Education Directorate

Review of SEN top-up funding in Essex

Training on the new system for practitioners, professionals and partners

Summer term 2022



Essex County Council

Introduction

These training sessions are intended to help practitioners and partners to prepare for the roll-out of the new approach to SEN top-up funding. They are specifically aimed at leaders and practitioners who will be involved in the exercise to allocate bandings to children and young people with top-up funding. The training sessions will be practitioner-focused – **as such, for settings, schools and colleges, we recommend the training is attended by leaders (e.g., setting managers, headteachers / principals, SLT members) and practitioners (e.g., SENCOs, Inclusion Leads, Heads of Additional Needs).** (Further sessions will be run for business managers and governors.)

The aim of the training will be to –

1. inform practitioners and partners about the new approach to top-up funding;
2. give practitioners opportunity to practice and become confident in using the new banding framework; and
3. prepare practitioners for the banding exercise in the autumn.

These training sessions will be discursive and practice-focused.

At the end of this slide-pack, we include details about immediate next steps and sources of support in preparing for and during the banding exercise.



Key overarching messages

- 1.** **The current system is unnecessarily complex and confusing** – different approaches, tools and decision-making processes for different sectors / phases, but also unnecessary complexity and inconsistent applications of approaches within sectors / for the same types of settings.
- 2.** **This review is being undertaken from a position of strength** – the aim is to create a sustainable long-term approach to SEN top-up funding, rather than being driven by the need to find financial savings. The high needs block in Essex is currently in a relatively healthy position.
- 3.** **The aim, therefore, is to create a clear-to-understand, transparent, sustainable and universal approach to allocating SEN top-up funding** – where decisions about how top-up funding is arranged are widely understood, and are part of a system that is consistent across phases.
- 4.** **There are important potential benefits, both in terms of SEN funding and wider SEND strategic aims** – the SEN top-up approach is part of the wider SEND system (the “pyramid”) and will reinforce work around OAP, inclusion, EHCNA guidance, EHCP quality, annual reviews etc.
- 5.** **The new approach set out in this pack has been co-produced and widely tested** – there is broad support from representatives of phases, sectors and partners involved in this process, who have been involved in co-producing and testing the proposals extensively.
- 6.** **As we move into the implementation phase, there are important implications for leaders in the Essex system** – focused implementation, consistent decision-making, regular communications to ensure fidelity to original aims and principles, to avoid “drift” or muddle.



What we will cover today: A summary

1. The context for this project

The overall distribution of SEN funding to local areas and the basic elements of SEN funding for providers is set nationally. The review of top-up funding in Essex has focused on what can be determined locally, specifically the allocation of SEN top-up funding. Current SEN top-up funding arrangements in Essex are unnecessarily and unsustainably complex and confusing. This review has aimed to create an effective, fair and sustainable local approach to distributing resources available for SEN top-up funding. (The driver for this work has not been to reduce funding.)

2. How these proposals fits with the Essex SEND system

The new approach to SEN top-up funding has been designed to align with and complement the SEND system in Essex, and work underway to strengthen the SEND system in Essex – specifically, defining “ordinarily-available provision” in mainstream settings, schools and colleges, improving the consistency of decision-making in relation to EHCNAs, improving the quality of EHCPs, and improving practice around annual reviews.

3. Co-producing the new approach

The new approach has been developed through co-production with a cross-phase, partnership-based Working Group and engagement with wider professionals and partners from across all sectors and phases. The Working Group have reviewed models used in other local areas, have agreed a set of guiding principles, and designed a new approach to SEN top-up funding that fulfils those – specifically, a new set of banding descriptors based on evidence of a young person’s need, and operational guidance about how these banding descriptors will be used across the County.

4. Roll-out and next steps

The new system will be implemented across a two-year period (academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24) to balance capacity demands with avoiding running two parallel systems. We will be asking all settings to allocate a “band” their young people with EHCPs/top-ups between now and November. After November, special schools and post-16 colleges will then have their bandings moderated and prepare to roll-out from September 2023, mainstream schools and early years from September 2024.



The contents of this pack

1. The context for this project

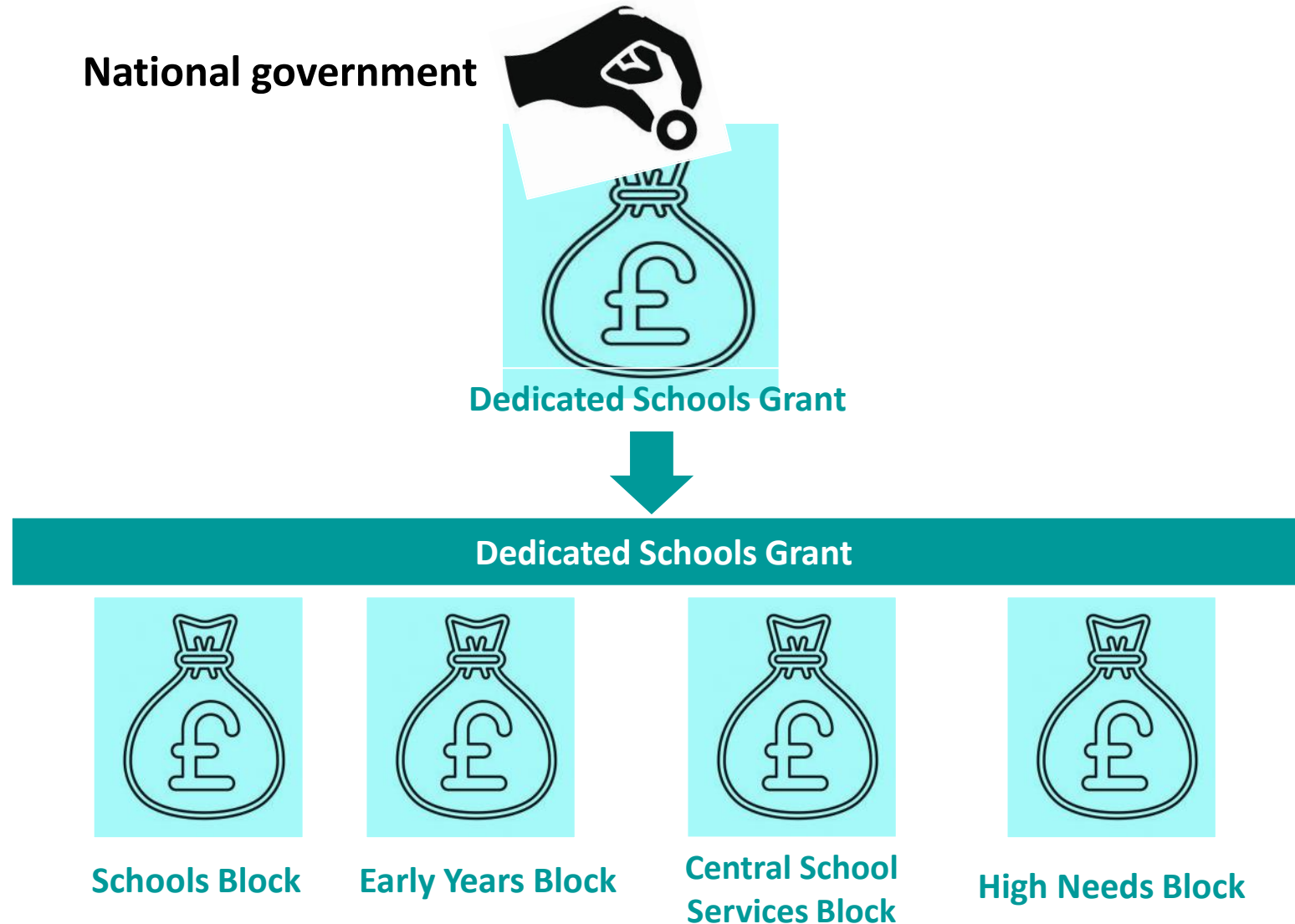
2. How this work fits with the Essex SEND system

3. The proposed new approach to SEN top-ups in Essex

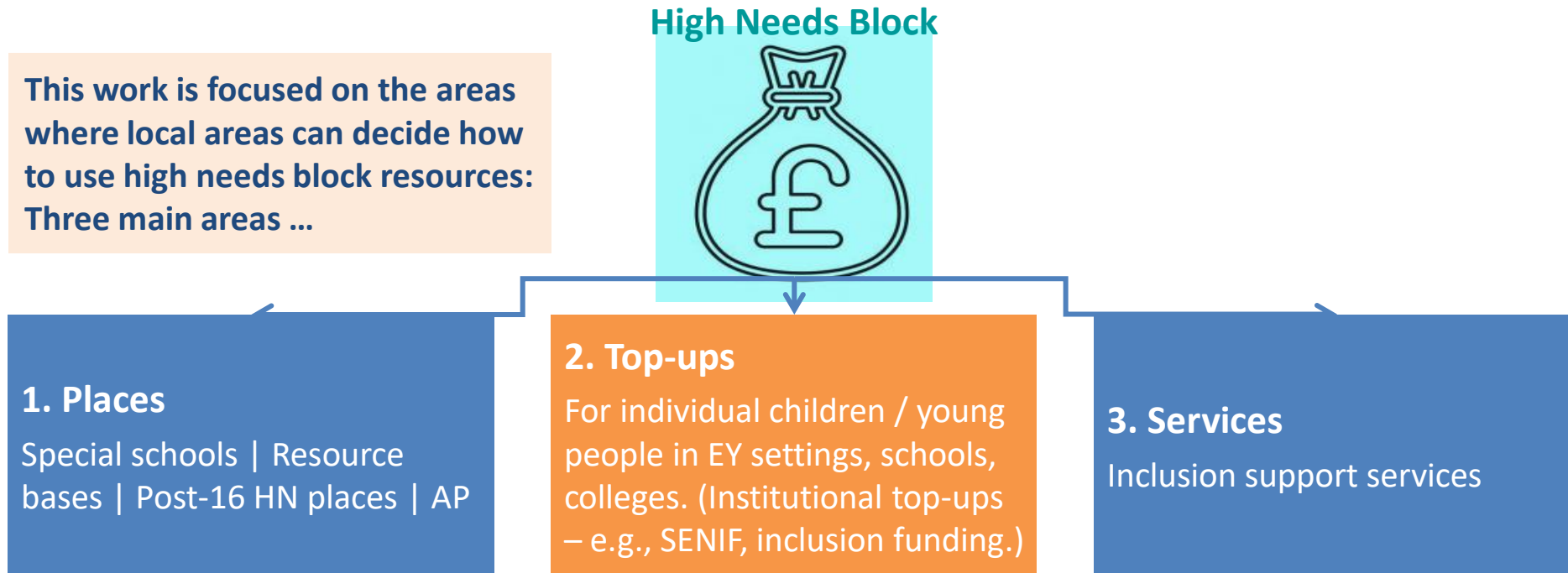
4. Roll-out and next steps



The national high needs funding model: The high needs block is one of four “blocks” within the Dedicated Schools Grant



The national context: Three inter-related things that the high needs block can fund – our work is focused how top-ups are allocated



Our primary focus is on ensuring that there is an effective, coherent, fair and transparent approach to arranging top-up funding. Sufficiency and high needs place-planning and decisions about how support services are funded is not directly within the scope of our work, but we are emphasising the inter-relations between these three areas of spend (and indeed between different sectors) and the need for decisions about the right balance between these areas to be taken in a fair, equitable and transparent way.



The national context: An overview of how SEN funding is designed nationally for each type of state-funded provider

| Education setting | Funds held within the delegated budgets of education settings | | Funds allocated by LAs for individual young people |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| National framework | Element 1 | Element 2 | Element 3 |
| Early years setting | Early Years National Funding Formula (including deprivation supplement) | | SEN Inclusion Fund Top-up funding |
| Mainstream schools | Schools National Funding Formula (Age-weighted pupil unit, AWPU) | <u>Notional</u> SEN Budget (school-level) | Top-up funding |
| Units / resourced provisions | | £6k per commissioned place | Top-up funding |
| Special schools | £10k per commissioned place | | Top-up funding |
| Further education | Post-16 National Funding Formula | Formula funding (SENK) £6k per high-needs learner | Top-up funding |

NB The above does not necessarily reflect every potential source of funding – Pupil Premium, lump sum, DAF.
 NB There is a different approach to funding independent providers, who negotiate fees with the commissioning LA.

Any questions on the previous section before we move onto the next?

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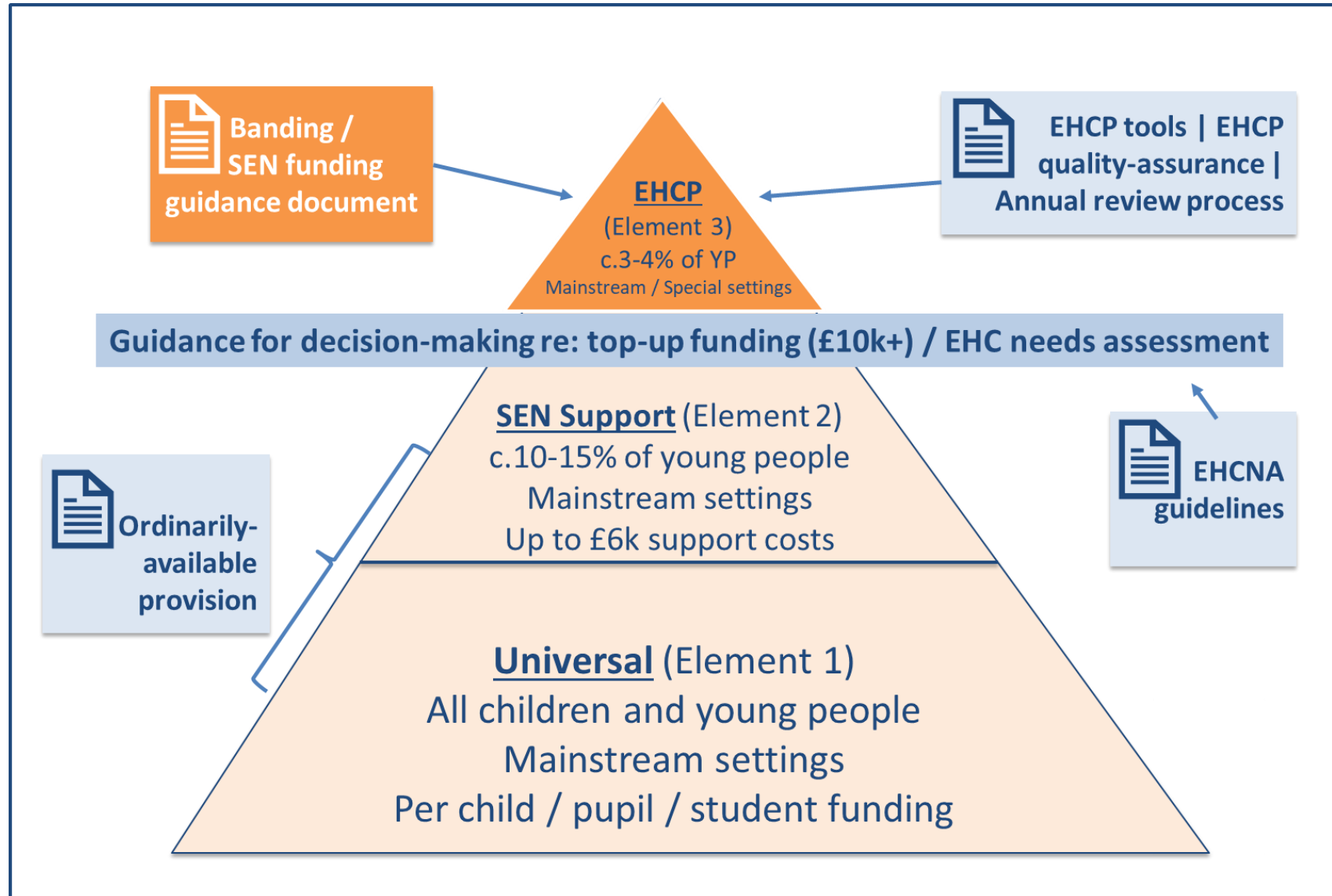
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4. Roll-out and next steps



How the future SEN top-up arrangements support and align with the Essex SEND system: The “pyramid” of the local SEND system



The banding framework is one part of the “pyramid” of the SEND system. It reinforces the aims around ordinarily-available provision, the EHC statutory process, and EHCP quality-assurance.



Any questions on the previous section before we move onto the next?

1. The context for this project

2. How these proposals fits with the Essex SEND system

3. The proposed new approach to SEN top-ups in Essex

4. Roll-out and next steps



The case for change: Why this work has been undertaken now

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Overall aim | <p>To create a single, “universal” approach to SEN funding that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• applies to all phases and settings, ensuring funding is governed by consistent principles;• is easy to understand, fair, efficient, and transparent; and• is part of a robust SEN system, aligns to key Essex-wide policies (EHCNA guidance, ordinarily-available provision, Panels), and is consistently applied across the county. |
| Main issue | <p>Put simply, the current top-up funding arrangements in Essex do not deliver on these aims. Current SEN top-up funding arrangements are unnecessarily complex and confusing. Each sector uses a different methodology to decide on the allocation of top-up funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Early years</u> – multiple funding streams, complex, no alignment with school-age funding.• <u>Schools</u> – banding system has compromised by additional elements added (provision, fixed / default top-ups). Inconsistent application. Overly complex. Not transparent.• <u>Post-16</u> – individually-negotiated top-ups not sustainable or equitable. <p>Current arrangements do not offer a robust, equitable and sustainable basis for arranging top-up funding, in the medium term and in anticipation of Green Paper proposals.</p> |
| Myth-busting | <p>The review is being taken from a position of strength – a case of “fixing the roof while the sun is shining”. The review of SEN top-up funding is not being driven by the need to make financial savings – the high needs block is in a health position, and the current quantum of resource for top-up funding (overall and for each sector) will be maintained. Instead, the aim is to develop a sustainable and effective long-term basis for allocating SEN top-ups.</p> |



Aims, scope and approach: How this project has been undertaken

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| The focus of the review | This project has focused on how SEN top-up funding in Essex is allocated – the “methodology” and decision-making process for deciding on how SEN top-up funding should be allocated from the resources available to Essex through the high needs block. (The allocation of the high needs block nationally and local decisions about the proportion spent on places, services and top-ups is not within the scope of this work.) | | |
| Aims of the review | <p><u>Cross-phase</u>: The review will consider SEN funding arrangements for young people with SEND in Essex, from birth to 25, and across all phases and stages of education.</p> <p><u>Co-production</u>: This will be a co-productive piece of work, engaging a wide range of partners across the Essex system – providers, practitioners, and families.</p> <p><u>Effective, coherent, fair, transparent</u>: The aim is to develop and implement a new SEN funding system that is <u>effective</u> (at targeting resources at where they are needed), <u>coherent</u> (supporting the movement of children between settings / phases), and <u>fair</u> and <u>transparent</u> (fostering understanding of why the system operates as it does).</p> | | |
| Our approach: Three phases | Phase 1: Building the evidence base (Summer term 2021, first half) | Phase 2: Co-producing proposals (Summer 2021 – Spring 2022) | Phase 3: Engagement and implementation (Summer 2022 and onwards) |



Co-production: A new approach to SEN top-up funding has been developed through co-production with partners across Essex

The work has been guided by a co-productive “Working Group”, whose members have reflected the different phases, settings and partners across the Essex system

The Working Group’s membership has included –

Early years settings | Primary schools (including links with EPHA) | Secondary schools (including links with ASHE) | Special schools (including links with ESSET) | Post-16 colleges (including links with FEDEC) | Essex Family Forum | Leaders of SEND services from ECC and the CCGs.

The Working Group has met monthly since July 2021. At key points during its work, we have also engaged broader groups of practitioners and partners to test and develop the new approach.

The Working Group’s work has followed an iterative process, informed by evidence about the current approach in Essex and approaches to SEN top-up funding used in other areas

The Working Group have followed a logical process, including –

- reviewing the evidence-base about current SEN top-up funding arrangements in Essex and considering approaches to SEN top-up funding used in other local areas;
- identifying a set of “design principles” from those approaches to guide consideration of a new approach in Essex and developing an initial set of proposals for a new approach to SEN top-up funding in Essex; and
- undertaking comprehensive testing of that approach to ensure it is fit-for-purpose; and
- putting forward a new approach, including two main products: a new set of banding descriptors and operational guidance on the new system.



Existing models: In considering what sort of SEND funding system we want in Essex, we have looked at two types of SEN funding models

Broadly speaking, there are two main types of SEN funding models: (1) needs-led and (2) provision-focused models. We shared examples of each banding model with the Working Group. There was broad support for the needs-led model – this was considered to deliver on the aims of the review of SEN funding in Essex – namely, an approach that is fair, coherent, transparent, easily understandable and sustainable.

Model 1: Needs-led

Needs-led models have several advantages.

1. **Universal description of a young person’s need** – across settings and phases.
2. **Supports transition** for young people.
3. **Strong basis in evidence** – identification of need based on professional assessment.
4. **Allows for flexibility of funding levels within a consistent framework for identifying needs.**
5. **More practical to navigate** – shorter documents, more focused descriptions of need, useful when a YP has multiple needs.

Model 2: Provision-focused model

There are drawbacks to provision-focused models.

1. **“Provision” introduces a greater element of subjectivity and potential for inconsistency** – based on settings’ decisions about their provision, not on assessed needs of the YP. This can lead to an “ad hoc”, fragmented set of top-up arrangements – precisely what this review has been set up to tackle.
2. **In addition, trying to describe both needs and provision can make these banding documents unwieldy** – longer documents are harder to navigate where YP have multiple needs.



Principles: We have now agreed a set of “design principles” for the methodology of a SEN funding system in Essex

Towards an agreed methodology for SEN funding: Five “design principles”

1. **Universality**: There should be a consistent set of principles and methodology for allocating SEN top-up funding across all phases and settings. There will be flexibility to reflect differences between phases and settings, but within a consistent, universal framework, and agreed transparently.
2. **Fairness**: It is recognised that the high needs block allocation for Essex is finite, and that the different parts of the SEND system form an interdependent “ecosystem”: decisions about funding in one area affect resources available to another. As such, strategic and operational decisions about SEN funding – *between* and *within* sectors – should be made transparently, consistently and fairly, to ensure resources are targeted where there is greatest need. There should be a strong element of peer moderation built in, scope for exceptional circumstances to be considered. The use of top-up funding to be overseen, reported on and reviewed regularly to ensure transparency and effectiveness.
3. **Needs-based**: In order to have a universal approach across phases and settings, the banding descriptors should be based on need, and not on provision (which becomes overly subjective). Banding descriptors should be specific, logical and internally consistent (e.g., a Band 3 in one area of need should mean the same as a Band 3 in another area of need).
4. **Ease of use**: The approach to SEN funding in Essex, and the tools used to inform and reach decisions, should be straightforward to explain, concise and easy to use.
5. **Mutually-reinforcing**: The SEN funding system should align with guidance for when to carry out EHC needs assessments, the definition of “ordinarily-available provision” in Essex, quality of EHCPs.



Operational guidance: A summary document for practitioners and leaders that sets out how the new SEN top-up system operates

What is the operational guidance document?

The operational guidance document has been written to provide an overview of the local arrangements within the Essex SEND system for organising the allocation of additional top-up funding for children and young people with SEN. It summarises the national SEN funding system for information, but its main focus is on how those aspects of SEN top-up funding that are determined locally are arranged within Essex.

Who should use the document?

The document has been designed to provide an overview of the national SEN funding context and Essex's arrangements for organising SEN top-up funding – it can be read by any partners in the local system.

We envisage, however, that SENCOs and Inclusion Leads will be the main users of this document in their day-to-day work.

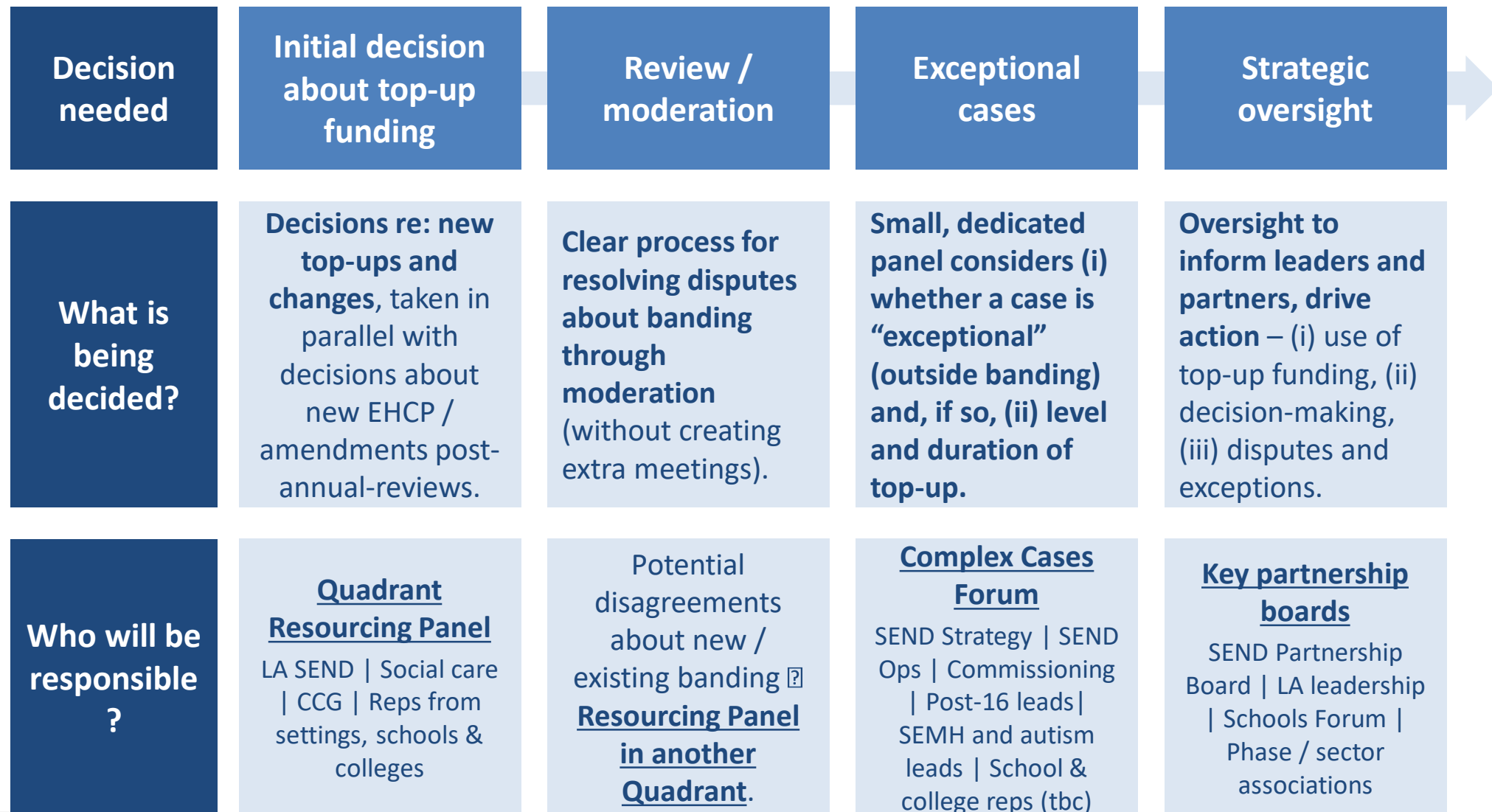
What does the operational guidance document contain?

The operational guidance document is in three parts.

1. Introduction and context – the national context and how Essex's local arrangements have been developed and are kept under review.
2. Local arrangements – the Essex approach to SEN top-up funding, including practical information on how the system works (how to band young people).
3. Decision-making – where and how decisions about SEN top-up funding are made, moderation, dispute resolution, exceptional circumstances and oversight of the Essex SEN funding system.



Decision-making: Ensuring consistent decision-making about top-up funding between phases, settings, and Quadrants



Methodology: An outline of the banding framework and descriptors, which form the methodology for agreeing SEN top-up funding

| | | Ordinarily-available provision | | High needs top-up funding | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | Universal | SENK | | | | | |
| Type of need | | Band A | Band B | Band C | Band D | Band E | Band F | Band G |
| Cognition & learning | | | | | | | | |
| Communication & interaction | Speech & language | | | | | | | |
| | Social communication | | | | | | | |
| Social, emotional & mental health | | | | | | | | |
| Sensory / physical needs | Vision | | | | | | | |
| | Hearing | | | | | | | |
| | Phys. / medical | | | | | | | |

← Guidance for EHC needs assessments

The banding framework: What the banding framework is (and what it is not)

What the banding framework is

The banding framework is a tool that enables settings and professionals to “speak the same language” when talking about levels of need as a means to ensure that the process for allocating top-up funding is fair between settings and sectors.

Each child’s or young person’s case should be considered individually, but the banding framework should help to ensure that decisions about top-up funding are taken in a consistent manner where young people have similar needs and are placed in similar settings. Having a consistent approach across all sectors and settings means that families and professionals do not have to negotiate different funding systems when a young person moves from one setting or phase to another.

What the banding framework is not

The banding framework is based on evidence of young people’s assessed needs – matching evidence of need to a set of descriptors as a fair, transparent and sustainable way of managing the finite, collective resource in the high needs block. **It is not based on “pricing” the cost of provision and seeking a band based on a financial value.**

Equally, **the allocation of a band does not alter or affect decisions about EHCPs through the statutory assessment or annual review process.**



The banding framework: Explanation of the bands

The banding descriptors have been designed to align with the full range of additional needs, across all age groups, including children whose needs can be met at a universal level (Band A) and through targeted interventions in-school and from external services (Band B), as well as children who may require additional top-up funding (Bands C to G).

Band A – the descriptors here describe the range needs of children / young people that a setting, school or college would ordinarily expect to come across and to meet through quality-first teaching, differentiation and reasonable adjustments. The children / young people described here may have an additional need, but not a special educational need. Their needs may be short-term, caused by other factors, and of the sort that settings, schools and colleges would be expected to meet through straightforward adaptations and differentiation.

Band B – the descriptors here describe the needs of children / young people who do have special educational needs, but not at the level that would require a statutory plan and/or additional top-up funding. These are levels of needs that settings, schools and colleges could be expected to meet through internal interventions and/or the involvement of external, targeted services (specialist teaching services, inclusion support services). Children in early years settings whose needs are reflected in most / all of the Band B descriptors may be eligible for top-up funding through the early years inclusion fund.

Bands C to G – the descriptors here describe the needs of children / young people who do have special educational needs at a level that would require special educational provision as set out in an EHCP and would require additional top-up funding.



The banding framework: How to use the banding framework – evidence when banding

Banding children and young people should not require settings to produce, request from other services, or submit any new reports setting out evidence of assessed needs. The key sources of evidence of needs will be the existing professional and setting-based reports that have been compiled for assessments (e.g., professional reports for EHCNAs) and annual reviews (or the equivalent for young people with top-ups who do not have EHCPs).

For new or recent assessments and EHCPs

The professional reports should be current and up-to-date – the reports listed in Section K of the EHCP should be the starting point for considering the evidence of the young person’s needs for the banding exercise.

For existing EHCPs

If the EHCP itself and some of the professional reports compiled when the EHCNA was undertaken are not sufficiently up-to-date, professional reports gathered through the annual review process or otherwise and setting reports on the needs, support and progress of the young people **will be considered**. The EHCP will not be given prominence over professional and review reports, some of which will be more up-to-date. To underscore the point, settings will not be expected to produce any new reports – they should draw on existing evidence.



The banding framework: How to use the banding framework – 4 steps

1. Draw together the available evidence and reports about a young person's needs

For most young people, the evidence will include the reports gathered through the EHCNA, EHCP and annual review process – including the reports listed in Section K. (It is important to consider these professional and setting reports first, and not to rely solely on the summary in the EHCP.) The process is the same for young people with top-ups who do not have EHCPs.

2. Match the evidence of need to the banding descriptors

The task is to find the band that “best fits” the evidence of assessed needs – this requires professional judgement. A young person does not need to fit all descriptors in a band – it is a case of finding the band that fits best. Words like “anxiety” appear in several bands, and should be considered in relation to the overall descriptor and the young person's age and stage.

3. Double-check against bands immediately above and below

If you think a young person has Band D needs for SEMH, double-check by cross-referencing the evidence of need to the descriptors in Band C (one band below) and Band E (one band above).

4. Identify the area of need with the most significant impact on learning

This will usually be the area of need where the child or young person has the highest level of need, and will be the area used to determine the final band for the young person. Young people may have needs in several areas, rather than nearly fitting into a single category of need. E.g., if a child has C&I and C&L needs matching band C, and SEMH needs matching band D, SEMH would be the area with the most significant impact on the learning.



Case studies: Practicing using the banding framework



Case studies: Practicing using the banding framework

Case study 1: Jack, Year 6

About the case study

We have shared a short profile of a young person with you in advance of the training. This is to provide a demonstration of how the new banding framework will work. The details in the profile are based on extracts from professional reports from the setting / school / college and other services.

About the young person

Jack is a very kind and friendly boy. He enjoys helping people especially if it involves going to get things for the teacher because he has a good memory for where things are in the classroom. He is well behaved and respectful in class. Jack has some interesting things to say.

Summary of the evidence of the young person's needs

Cognition and learning

Y2 in writing – difficulties recording his work. Towards Y2 in reading. Towards Y4 in maths but inconsistent. Very little progress since Y3. Significant difficulty retaining information, organising and planning work.

Communication and interaction

Lack of awareness of personal boundaries / space. Regularly anxious / withdraws into himself. Can experience distress. Difficulties in expressing feelings. Lack of understanding of social and physical risks, vulnerable.

Social, emotional and mental health

When dysregulated, can take a long time to calm Jack to the point he can access learning. Uses self-talk as coping mechanism when distressed. Compares himself to peers – impact on self-esteem and wellbeing.

Physical / sensory

Poor hand-writing. 5th percentile for balance – risk of falls, trips, bumping into people. Sitting upright can be fatiguing. Diagnoses for autism, attention deficit disorder, and development co-ordination disorder.



Case studies: Practicing using the banding framework

Case study 1: Jack, Year 6

| | | Ordinarily-available provision | | High needs top-up funding | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | Universal | SENK | | | | | |
| Type of need | | Band A | Band B | Band C | Band D | Band E | Band F | Band G |
| Cognition & learning | | | | | | | | |
| Communication & interaction | Speech & language | | | | | | | |
| | Social communication | | | | | | | |
| Social, emotional & mental health | | | | | | | | |
| Sensory / physical needs | Vision | | | | | | | |
| | Hearing | | | | | | | |
| | Phys. / medical | | | | | | | |

Guidance for EHC needs assessments

Case studies: Practicing using the banding framework

Case study 2: Emmy, Year 10

About the case study

We have shared a short profile of a young person with you in advance of the training. This is to provide a demonstration of how the new banding framework will work. The details in the profile are based on extracts from professional reports from the setting / school / college and other services.

About the young person

Although Emmy finds learning difficult, she loves coming to school. She has a small group of friends, who like spending time together. Emmy likes to please everybody and wants to do well. Emmy loves animals. Looking after them and this is something she would like to do after she finishes school.

Summary of the evidence of the young person's needs

Cognition and learning

Attainment significantly below age-related expectations (Y2). Not able to work independently. Academic progress very slow, despite interventions. Difficulty retaining information and planning. Visual motor integration difficulties.

Communication and interaction

Challenges understanding and processing instructions. Can hold basic conversation, but difficulty expressing her thoughts fully. Concerns about inclusion and potential vulnerability, especially when she leaves school.

Social, emotional and mental health

Happy in small group of friends. Does not get angry, but occasionally upset. Does not like to do anything in front of an audience. Aware of impact of difficulties in learning. Showing signs of low self-esteem and confidence.

Physical / sensory

Diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes – blood sugar levels are closely monitored.



Case studies: Practicing using the banding framework

Case study 2: Emmy, Year 10

| | | Ordinarily-available provision | | High needs top-up funding | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | Universal | SENK | | | | | |
| Type of need | | Band A | Band B | Band C | Band D | Band E | Band F | Band G |
| Cognition & learning | | | | | | | | |
| Communication & interaction | Speech & language | | | | | | | |
| | Social communication | | | | | | | |
| Social, emotional & mental health | | | | | | | | |
| Sensory / physical needs | Vision | | | | | | | |
| | Hearing | | | | | | | |
| | Phys. / medical | | | | | | | |

Guidance for EHC needs assessments

Any questions on the previous section before we move onto the next?

1. The context for this project

2. How this work fits with the Essex SEND system

3. The proposed new approach to SEN top-ups in Essex

4. Roll-out and next steps



Implementation timeline: Transition will take place across a two-year period (academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24).

This is to strike a balance between speed and system capacity during the transition. All settings will be asked to band their young people at the start of this process, but some sectors will then have their banding moderated in 2022/23 (Year 1) ready for roll-out from September 2023, while others will be moderated during 2023/24 (Year 2) ready for roll-out from September 2024.

| | Timescales: Y1 | Timescales: Y2 |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Initial financial modelling – agree the quantum of SEN top-up funding for each sector in advance. (Avoids “zero-sum”.) | Spring term 2022 | |
| 2. Banding exercise – initial training for all settings on the new methodology. All settings to band their young people. | Training – May-Sept 2022 Banding exercise – June-Nov 2022 | |
| 3. Further financial modelling – use the banding exercise to set top-up values, check affordability, benchmark sectors / settings. | Nov-Dec 2022 | |
| 4. Moderation exercise – in parallel, moderation of a sample of bandings for each setting. Discussions to ensure consistency. | Nov 2022 – early 2023 | November 2023 |
| 5. Final financial modelling – use the outcomes of the moderation exercise to set final top-ups, transitional protection. | Dec 2022 / early 2023 | Dec 2023 – early 2024 |
| 6. Roll-out – communication of top-ups to settings, including any transitional protection). Advice in lead-up to implementation. | March 2023 “Go live” – Sept 2023 | March 2024 “Go live” – Sept 2024 |

Year 1 – special schools | post-16 colleges.

Year 2 – mainstream schools (including Enhanced Provisions) | early years settings.

New assessments – allocated top-up under existing system + band under the new system.



Next steps: Recap of the immediate next steps for practitioners and settings

**June – September
2022**

Attend training sessions – discuss and share within your leadership team / setting, so that leaders, SENCOs / inclusion leads, and business managers understand the new system.

**Training – November
2022**

Band young people with EHCPs and/or in receipt of top-up funding. The main period for banding will be September to November. Special schools and post-16 colleges, who will be moderated in Year 1, will want to start after the training in June.

**Summer term 2022
and ongoing**

If you have questions about any part of the banding exercise, there will be advice and “troubleshooting” support from a group of lead practitioners, a dedicated email inbox, and online FAQs. (Details on the following page.)

**November 2022 /
November 2023**

Year 1 – prepare for moderation discussions.
Year 2 – prepare to update banding where necessary and for moderation discussions.



The banding exercise: What to expect for schools and colleges

(For SEND Teams and partners to be aware)

You will receive a template (see the example below) with a list of children and young people with EHCPs / top-ups in your school / college.

LIST OF CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE IN RECEIPT OF TOP-UP FUNDING/WITH AN EHCP IN ESSEX EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Setting: Any Setting
DfE No: 1234

Headteacher/Principal Sign Off:

| Setting to amend details if incorrect (overtyping cells) and add details of new children/young people | | | | | | | Band Allocation | | | Setting to complete if appropriate |
|---|---------|----------|------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------|---|
| Capita ID | Surname | Forename | DoB | NCY | LA Responsible for Administering EHCP | LA Responsible for Funding Top-Up | Setting to complete | LA to complete | | |
| | | | | | | | Band Recommended by Setting | Moderated | Final | Comments (if a leaver, please add leave date here, if a new child/young person, please add the start date here) |
| 123456 | Jones | Jamie | 22/02/2016 | 1 | Essex | Essex | | | | |
| 123457 | Smith | Chloe | 09/06/2013 | 4 | Essex | Essex | | | | |

- Having allocated bands to your children / young people and moderated the bandings internally, you will be asked to send the completed banding template back to ECC.
- If you need support or advice during this process, there will be dedicated resources available online, a dedicated email address, and drop-ins with “lead practitioners”.
- You can expect that a sample (c.10-20%) of submitted banding returns will be moderated to ensure consistency. Details of the moderation will be provided in the autumn. To underscore the point, there will be no need to generate any additional reports or assessments, beyond existing written evidence of need, for the banding exercise or the moderation.



The banding exercise: What this means in practical terms – Five steps to prepare for the banding exercise

LIST OF CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE IN RECEIPT OF TOP-UP FUNDING/WITH AN EHCP IN ESSEX EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Setting: Any Setting
DfE No: 1234

Headteacher/Principal Sign Off:

| Capita ID | Surname | Forename | DoB | NCY | LA Responsible for Administering EHCP | LA Responsible for Funding Top-Up | Band Allocation | | | Comments (if a leaver, please add leave date here, if a new child/young person, please add the start date here) |
|-----------|---------|----------|------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------|---|
| | | | | | | | Setting to complete | LA to complete | | |
| | | | | | | | Band Recommended by Setting | Moderated | Final | |
| 123456 | Jones | Jamie | 22/02/2016 | 1 | Essex | Essex | | | | |
| 123457 | Smith | Chloe | 09/06/2013 | 4 | Essex | Essex | | | | |

- 1. Check the list of children / young people with EHCPs and existing top-ups.** You will be sent a list of children / young people with EHCPs and/or in receipt of top-up funding by the LA (except IPRAs). Please check this list – correct errors for existing records / rows or add young people if appropriate. (Please do not delete any records or rearrange the rows.) Start preparing your lists to cross-refer.
- 2. Get your evidence ready.** No need to prepare additional evidence, but you will want to draw together existing evidence – e.g., most recent annual review, One Plan, professional reports, progress reports.
- 3. Make your decisions about the allocation of bands.** The banding exercise involves finding a “best fit” between the written evidence of a young person’s need and the banding descriptors. (NB This is a practitioner, not an admin, task – it requires experience of interpreting professional reports and assessments.) We recommend internal moderation to ensure consistency (as well as for CPD).
- 4. Record your decision.** This is the “Setting Decision” (and should be signed off by the headteacher / principal / manager). It is not the final decision – that will follow the moderation exercise.
- 5. Prepare for external moderation.** A sample of submitted bands will be moderated.

Additional points to help with the banding exercise

Are young people with top-ups but no EHCPs to be included?

Early years – yes, children receiving Inclusion Funding will have a band.
Mainstream schools – no, pupils with IPRA / medical needs top-ups will be handled separately and should not be included in the banding exercise.
Special schools – this should not apply – all* pupils should have EHCPs.
Post-16 – yes, allocate a band to any student with a high-needs top-up.

Should we band young people without EHCPs but with EHCNAs in train?

No – children and young people currently undergoing EHCNAs will be allocated a band as part of the statutory assessment process by the Quadrant Resourcing Panels. Settings, schools and colleges should not include young people with EHCNAs in train on their banding returns.

Which young people should we band?

We recommend banding all young people with EHCPs and/or in receipt of high needs top-up funding in your institution. Importantly, this includes young people due to leave your setting in July 2022 – these young people are likely to move to another educating institution in September, and their band will transfer with them. (For special schools – we suggest prioritising allocating a band for the young people due to be leaving your school in July 2022.)



Additional points to help with the banding exercise

Are there implications of banding for the content of EHCPs?

No – the allocation of a band relates solely and exclusively to the allocation of high needs funding for top-ups. It will not, of itself, automatically alter the content of an EHCP. If changes need to be made to an EHCP, this will be done through the statutory annual review process. (It is possible, although rare, for someone to have an EHCP and be allocated Band A/B – no top-up.)

What will happen if there are disputes during the moderation?

As a first step there will be dialogue between the moderators and the setting – as this will be based on evidence of need, this dialogue should resolve most disputes. If differences remain, while the final decision rests with the LA (given statutory and financial responsibilities), any residual disagreement would be picked up at the next annual review.



Next steps: Where to get support and advice after this training

1. Online resources including updated FAQs

Alongside the key documents relating to the new approach, we will also publish on [the local offer](#) and with our [key SEND policies](#) a list of frequently-asked questions, which we will keep up-to-date. Recordings of the training will also be available, in case colleagues want to go back and refresh their understanding.

2. Dedicated email address

There will be a dedicated email address where any questions can be emailed. Please treat this as your first port-of-call if you have any questions about the banding exercise, template, process or the new SEN top-up funding system in Essex. Please email any questions to senstrategy@essex.gov.uk.

3. “Troubleshooting” advice from Lead Practitioners

There will be a cadre of Lead Practitioners who have received in-depth training in the new banding approach. They can be contacted by emailing senstrategy@essex.gov.uk. They will also be available through weekly drop-in sessions. Details of how to book the drop-in sessions will be provided shortly.



We will take questions throughout the session, but we will also leave time at the end for any questions and discussion.

