

Date: 23rd June 2022

Dear Parent or Carer

Changes to local arrangements for children and young people with Special Educational Needs

I am writing to update you further on the changes we are making to how we support children with special educational needs, which I set out in my previous letter of 8 April.

This letter is intended to set out a simple summary of all the changes we have been making, planning, and are now implementing for children and young people with special educational needs. At the end of the letter, I have provided details of online sessions we will run to help explain what is happening and where you can find out more.

Our aim is to ensure that all children and young people with special educational needs can access high quality support in their local area and that for the majority this will be in their local mainstream school. For children with a higher level of need we have a range of settings providing specialist support including access centres, resource bases and special schools. We want to try to ensure that the places in these settings are available and prioritise the children and young people who need it most.

We have already been increasing the number of specialist places available and intend to provide more in the future to meet increasing demand.

We also want to ensure that the limited funding we have available is being used on a needs-led basis, and that the systems we have in place for identifying need are applied consistently and fairly across schools and colleges.

For children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) we have been working with school leaders to design a new set of arrangements for describing the levels of need, which we are calling 'Bands'. The funding that the local authority provides for pupils with EHCPs (known as Top-Up) is in addition to money provided to schools directly. From September, we will be allocating according to the Band.

This approach is not unique to South Gloucestershire and in fact most local authorities operate banding levels and allocate funding in this way.

We have had to adjust the amount of funding we provide for Top-Ups, because the amount that we spend in South Gloucestershire is much higher than the average spends by other councils across the country. This means that schools will receive less money for Top-Ups than they did previously and may need to change the way that they meet need. They will still have to meet children and young people's needs of course and we will help them to do this.

To help schools manage the changes we are taking a phased approach to reducing the Top-Up over a 3-year period rather than having to deal with the full reduction in a single year.

Department for Children, Adults and Health



In addition to this, we are also investing in areas where spending has been low in the past and where we know that by increasing investment we can make a significant, positive difference to children, young people and their families.

We are investing more money in early years, for example, providing more training so that staff in early years childcare settings are more skilled to identify if a child has additional needs at the earliest stage. They will then be able to work with the right specialist professionals to deliver support at the earliest stage. We are also investing more to ensure that this support is available for children and their families. These investments in early years have already begun.

There is an opportunity for parents and carers to hear more about these changes through an on-line session arranged with the South Glos Parent and Carer Forum on **Thursday 30th June 10:00 - 12:00 pm**. Officers will explain the new banding system which funds Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) and you will be able to share your views and ask questions. The event will be recorded and put online so you can watch it back when you like if you can't attend at the time. You can book your space at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ehcp-banding-qa-session-tickets-368237958647>

Following this information session, we will be holding online 1 to1 surgeries. These are being held on the following dates and you can book a 15 minute slot by emailing ISENDSupport@southglos.gov.uk

Monday 11th July 10:00 - 12:00 pm
Tuesday 12th July 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Thursday 14th July 2:00 - 4:00 pm
Thursday 14th July 7:00 - 9:00 pm

You can also ask questions, give your views and raise your concerns via our quick survey, and we will feedback all comments to South Gloucestershire Council. The link for this is https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SGPC_InclEd

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Hilary Smith'.

Hilary Smith