

Children's Services Overview and scrutiny Committee – 28 July 2020



Public Question received from Melissa Byers – BCP resident

The Banded funding system was introduced, 2019, for children receiving the High Needs Budget. Figures from an FOI to BCP, confirm an average funding reduction of 44% and evidenced there has been no subsequent Scrutiny Committee review to assess the impact upon children and schools. There is no system of recording statistically how many recipients of Banded funding appeal for more funding. Can the Scrutiny committee comment why this has not been reviewed? Further cuts open the potential for a Judicial Review should the system not have proper scrutiny and accountable systems in place.

Response from the Committee

Thank you for your question to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighting your concern at the average funding reduction from the High Needs Budget. The banding of funding for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) was developed from a proposal by a working group of the Schools Forum. The Forum is an independent group of education representatives. LA officers and Cabinet portfolio holders for Children's and Resources also attend but they are not members. The Forum oversees the use of the Dedicated School's Grant (DSG) which includes funding for schools, early years providers and SEND including EHCPs. Banding was introduced to allow greater flexibility in how schools managed resource in meeting the needs of children with an EHCP. It is acknowledged that this did result in an overall saving to the DSG, which was, and remains, overspent. This was understood when the Schools Forum proposed this change.

Although the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee have not considered this issue specifically it should be noted that the DSG was signed off as part of the Council budget setting process which was of course subject to scrutiny. The Committee have been made aware of the pressures on the DSG and have discussed how these might be addressed. This issue forms part of a much wider ranging recovery plan which has been in place for some years. I have been advised by Officers that it would be appropriate to come back with an update on the broader recovery plan to a future meeting. Consideration is being given to the Committee's work programme next week for the remainder of the municipal year and we will take this into consideration. In accordance with the Council's Constitution the Overview and Scrutiny function welcomes suggestions from members of the public for topics of consideration.

Councillor Richard Burton
Chairman of the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee