



Schools Funding Forum 10th February 2022

ITEM 6

Subject Heading:

De-delegation of funding for core school improvement activities 2022-23

Report Author:

Nick Carter – Principal Finance Officer (Schools)

Eligibility to vote:

LA maintained school representatives

SUMMARY

This item provides details of the Local Authority's proposal to de-delegate funding for core school improvement activity in 2022-23, following the announcement by the Department for Education that the School Improvement, Monitoring and Brokerage Grant will be reduced by 50% in 2022-23 prior to complete removal from 2023-24.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Schools' Funding Forum agrees to:

- (i) the de-delegation of £5.11 per pupil for core school improvement activities for financial year 2022-23

REPORT DETAIL

The funding of core school improvement activities

In January 2022 the DfE announced that the School Improvement, Monitoring and Brokerage Grant would be reduced by 50% for financial year 2022-23 and then removed completely from 2023-24.

This follows a Government consultation in the autumn entitled 'Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded'. Although 71% of respondents opposed the removal of the Grant, the DfE has taken the decision that it should cease.

At the same time, local authorities were given the power to fund all improvement activity, including core activity, via de-delegation with the agreement of schools forums or the Secretary of State.

Havering received £178k in the 2021-22 financial year. This represents 26% of the funding for the non-traded activities carried out by Hsis, which encompass the core improvement activities. Making up the 50% shortfall for 2022-23 would require £89k of de-delegated funds, which equates to £5.11 for each pupil Year R -11. Havering is seeking the agreement of the Schools Funding Forum to de-delegate this amount.

This item was discussed by the Schools Funding Forum at their meeting on 13th January 2022. Representatives from LA maintained schools felt that they needed further information on the use of the School Improvement, Monitoring and Brokerage Grant, and the opportunity to discuss the matter further with school in their clusters, before they could consider de-delegation of funds.

A letter sent to Head Teachers of LA maintained primary schools informing them that the LA was seeking Schools Funding Forum approval for de-delegation, and outlining the rationale, is shown at Appendix A. A paper providing further information regarding the purpose of the budget, the implications of not approving de-delegation and options for the future is shown at Appendix B. This was sent to Head Teachers of LA maintained primary schools on 25th January 2022.



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10 January 2022

To: Head Teachers of LA maintained primary schools in Havering

Dear Colleague

Proposed de-delegation of funding for core school improvement activities 2022-23

At the meeting of the Schools Funding Forum on Thursday (13th January 2022) we will be asking the LA maintained primary schools members if they are prepared to approve the de-delegation of £5.11 per pupil for LA core school improvement costs. I wanted to provide you with some background to this, as it is coming at short notice and after other de-delegation arrangements have been agreed.

In November the DfE held a consultation entitled 'Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded'. In this they made two proposals:

- 1 That the 'School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant' is reduced by 50% for the 2022-23 financial year and then removed completely from 2023-24
- 2 That LAs should be given the power to fund all improvement activity, including core activity though de-delegation, with the required agreement from the schools forum or Secretary of State. Essentially LAs will be permitted to obtain the funding lost from the reduction and removal of the grant through de-delegation, if agreement is given.

There had been no indication that the consultation was coming and it came late in the planning cycle, after most LAs, including Havering, had gone through the process of de-delegation for other services. Making up the 50% shortfall for 2022-23 would require £89k of de-delegated funds, which equates to £5.11 for each pupil in Year R -11.

To date the DfE response to the consultation has not been published. This was due in 'late December / early January'. The DfE have advised that where LAs are seeking to de-delegate funding they would should seek approval from their schools forum for de-delegation prior to the publication of the response. This would be conditional on that response including a reduction in the grant for 2022-23.

The grant is provided to support councils in fulfilling their core improvement activities. These include the statutory power to warn and intervene in schools causing concern. Guidance sets out the expectations that councils should:

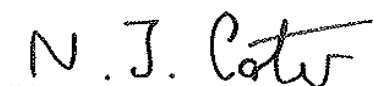
- Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area and work with them to explore ways to support progress.
- Work closely with the Regional School Commissioner, diocese and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need
- Where underperformance is recognised, work with the RSC to ensure the right approach, including warning notices and intervention powers
- Encouraging good and outstanding schools to take responsibility for their own improvement, support other schools and enable other schools to access the support they need.

The DfE justification for removing the grant is that there is no longer a clear distinction between core improvement activities and additional improvement activities. Core improvement activities form part of a wider continuum of support. This creates a disparity with academies, where funding for support would be top-sliced from the individual academy budget by the academy trust. The DfE are, therefore, suggesting that support for LA maintained schools should be financed through de-delegation, which is, in practice, the LA top-slicing the sum needed to provide support to LA maintained schools.

The grant represents 26% of the funding for the non-traded activities carried out by Hsis, which encompass the core improvement activities detailed above. For schools identified as requiring additional support this will include regular school performance review meetings and implementing any actions agreed. This can include support for senior leadership, middle leadership, specific curriculum subjects or indeed any areas of concern. Support may be provided by Hsis staff, or HSiS may arrange for support to be provided in conjunction with another school, providing that school with the opportunity to be a system leader.

The core improvement support received will vary between schools, based on performance and need, but can also vary over time. A school may not require additional support at present but may do as circumstances change. A suitably funded school improvement service will help to ensure that schools requiring support are identified early, and support put in place when needed, wherever that may be across the family of Havering maintained schools. It should be remembered that currently all LA maintained schools in Havering are judged by OFSTED to be Good or Outstanding.

Yours sincerely



Nick Carter Principal Finance Officer (Schools)

Proposed de-delegation of funding for core school improvement activities 2022-23

At the meeting of the Schools Funding Forum on Thursday 13th January 2022, the Local Authority maintained primary schools members were asked to approve the de-delegation of £5.11 per pupil for LA core school improvement statutory costs.

This paper provides LA maintained primary schools with further information regarding the purpose of the budget, the implications of not approving it, and options for the future when the grant is totally removed.

For context, Havering has historically received an annual 'School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant' of £169k, which the DfE have confirmed is to be reduced by 50% for the 2022-23 financial year, and then removed completely from 2023-24. The grant is provided to support councils in fulfilling their core improvement and statutory activities, including the statutory power to warn and intervene in schools causing concern, to understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, and work with them to explore ways to support progress.

Local Authorities already work closely with the Regional School Commissioner, diocese and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need, and where underperformance is recognised, work with the RSC to ensure the right approach, including warning notices and intervention powers. The Local Authority also encourages good and outstanding schools to take responsibility for their own improvement, to support other schools, and enable other schools to access the support they need.

In general, the statutory functions related to school improvement activity is delivered by a range of staff in the Havering School Improvement Service (HSIS), which is part of the Education Quality & Effectiveness team in the Education Services directorate. The grant represents a significant (26%) proportion of the total non-traded budget within HSIS, and any reduction in the overall budget would impact on the statutory services and support for schools.

The core improvement and statutory support received will vary between schools, based on performance and need, but can also vary over time. A school may not require additional support at present, but may do as circumstances change. A suitably funded school improvement service will help to ensure that schools requiring support are identified early, and support put in place when needed, wherever that may be across the family of Havering maintained schools.

The type of activity delivered through the grant is broadly defined under either *Quality Assurance* or *Safeguarding*, and further details for each aspect are shown below.

Quality Assurance and Schools Causing Concern;

The grant contributes towards the overall salary and on-costs for the Senior Inspector – Schools Causing Concern within HSIS, as well as other staff within HSIS and across the Education directorate who contribute to the monitoring and improvement activity and support. Below are the specific areas of support;

- Development and delivery of QA framework, which includes the provision of an annual QA support visit for all schools.
- Following up on any concerns or issues raised by leaders during the QA visit with other LA officers including those in other teams e.g. H&S, highways, catering, HR, etc.
- Provide regular updates to schools on OFSTED inspection practice/foci.

- Specific support for schools preparing for inspection, including pre-inspection briefings, support for subject leaders etc.
- Discussion with inspector and follow-up as needed with HT, including attendance at feedback meeting.
- Investigate and respond to school based Ofsted complaints within statutory timescales.
- Specific support for Schools Causing Concern;
 - Preparing for, and contributing at half-termly Schools Monitoring Group from officers across Education directorate, including HSIS, HGS, HR, Finance, Admissions, Attendance, Behaviour, CAD, School Organisation, Asset Management, H&S, to identify concerns and agree support arrangements.
 - Responsible for management of half-termly performance review meetings at each school causing concern, including attendance at any additional committees, such as finance and resources,
 - Arranging and brokering any additional support for school causing concern, including LA officers, school-to-school support, focussed visits etc.
 - Commissioning external advisers due to specific expertise required to support schools development plans.
 - Responsible for overseeing any additional support, including following-up on any specific reports, and getting feedback from the school being supported.
 - Providing information for LA School's finance lead for funding forums reports to ensure transparency and accountability.
 - Providing additional time to school causing concern, including regular keeping-in-touch conversations, reviewing and evaluating key documents, and providing feedback e.g. SSE/SDP/Subject plans.
 - Organising and arranging reviews in school causing concern including the involvement of LA officers from HSIS and other teams e.g. CAD, Early Years etc.
 - Writing and QA'ing reports following in school support e.g. reviews, working with leaders.
 - Following up on formal LA powers of intervention, including letters of concern or warning notices.
 - Brokering of formal federations, including support for legal processes, consultation papers, consultation support, support with meetings etc.
 - Support for placing of governors and selection of governors/new governor induction.
- Conduct regular analysis of results for reporting to schools, and elected members through Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- Supports HT by providing a single point of contact (HSIS QA Link Inspector), including regular contact through calls and emails, supporting them if they have failing teachers, issues with governors, problems with challenging parents etc.
- Attend regular meeting with diocese and/or RSC to discuss schools causing concern.
- Support HT recruitment process.
- Provide training for statutory moderation, including acting as assessment co-ordinator role, and assessment networks for schools.
- Supporting with visits to schools whilst end of key Stage statutory assessments taking place to ensure processes being followed correctly.
- Supporting STA investigations if required.

Safeguarding;

The grant contributes towards the overall salary and on-costs for the two Safeguarding Advisors within HSIS. Below are the specific areas of support;

- Deliver network meetings on a monthly/half-termly basis to all Havering schools with key updates and focused presentations from key safeguarding partners and agencies including HAST, Operation Encompass, Community Safety/DA Act 2021

updates, Prevent, RSHE, Child Abuse Linked to Faith & Belief, Neglect/Obesity etc.

- Regular liaison with Havering Safeguarding Children's Partnership training officer regarding any training needs/requests from schools.
- Provide regular DSL communications, including updates; warnings and advice in response to local and national events/concerns (including hoaxes etc.); training opportunities (e.g. HSCP courses and Prevent); key projects (e.g. Barnardo's/ Harmful Sexual Behaviours) etc.
- Provision of advice to all schools via telephone/email on a wide range of topics, including Safer Recruitment/SCR/DBS; issues around Parental Responsibility; CME; private fostering; peer-on-peer abuse etc.
- Attend regular meetings with LADO to discuss specific cases, including direct liaison with schools when a concern received by the LADO has not met threshold, but a discussion has been important.
- Investigate and respond to school based Ofsted safeguarding complaints within statutory timescales.
- Production of safeguarding training video for Governors, available through Governor Hub.
- Attend regular digital safeguarding meetings with to co-ordinate the LA on-line safety messages, including specific advice and guidance to schools.
- Complete quality assurance of S175 audits completed by schools.
- Co-ordination of external training, such as recent FGM training offered for all schools by an external consultant.
- Attendance at a range of meetings/panels, including:
 - HSCP
 - CSE
 - MACE
 - Missing
 - Contest
 - Channel
- Responsible for education input into the updating of social care safeguarding documents, including ensuring the threshold document is up to date and incorporates contextual risks/harm.
- Supporting information sharing across Safeguarding partners
- Liaison with key providers, including charities, regarding a range of projects for schools, including Barnardos /Harmful Sexual Behaviours, attendance at meetings, sharing communications with DSLs, chasing up participation.
- Liaison with commercial Concerns companies, including contacting CPOMS/My Concern on behalf of schools.
- Regularly updating a range of policies and guidance documents for use across Havering. In 2021, these included KCSIE 2021 with tracked changes; Safeguarding & CP policy; Equality policy; Whistleblowing policy; Safer Recruitment guidance; Transgender guidance; First Day Calling policy.
- Maintaining a list of safeguarding contacts, which is updated and distributed at least annually, and ongoing advice given to individual DSLs/schools around key contacts.
- S175 model audit pro-forma updated annually and sent to all schools and AP, which includes the template for the HT's safeguarding report to governors.

Other De-delegated Services:

The Local Authority recognises that this is a further request for funding from maintained schools, at a time when there are many competing pressures for budget. It is hoped that the information above provides greater clarity on how this grant has been used.

The Local Authority has completed some further analysis to show the overall impact of the wider de-delegated services on school budgets, and the table below shows the percentage of the ISB for the various de-delegated services;

Services de-delegated in Havering - percentage of ISB

	%
Insurance *	0.40
Maternity leave **	0.59
Trade Union facility time	0.06
EAL	0.12
Behaviour Support and Attendance services	0.24
Free school meal eligibility checking	0.03
Contingencies (schools in financial difficulty)	0.24
	1.68

Because insurance and cost of maternity are generally either deducted direct from the ESFA for academies, or are charged to individual academy budgets, the table below shows the overall impact on school budgets discounting these costs;

De-delegated services excluding insurance and maternity	0.69%
Education Functions costs subtracted from school budgets	0.39%
Total de-delegated (excl. insurance and maternity) and Education Functions	1.08%
Sums budgeted by schools for school improvement, finance, GS support, HR and payroll	1.41%
Total cost to school budgets of central service provision	2.49%

For comparison, MAT's top-slice for central support services range from 3% to 15%, although most average between 5-6%.

Impact of Not Approving De-delegation:

LA maintained primary schools members of the Funding Forum have been asked to approve the de-delegation of £5.11 per pupil for LA core school improvement statutory functions detailed above, and by approving this de-delegation, the functions can continue in their entirety.

If a decision is taken to not approve the de-delegation, then a number of services will have to cease, or be delivered differently, but this will ultimately be determined by elected Member priorities as to what is funded, or not. However, given the extent of the budget reduction, the following changes to services may be necessary;

Quality Assurance and Schools Causing Concern;

- Annual QA support visit only for maintained schools identified by HSIS as causing concern, with all other schools receiving a QA support visit every two years, based on Ofsted cycle.
- Specific support for Schools Causing Concern;
 - Half-termly performance review meetings at each school causing concern, would have to be charged as part of a traded package at the rate of £275 per half day, including attendance at any additional committees, such as finance and resources.
 - Additional support for school causing concern, such as focussed visits etc would have to be charged as part of a traded package at the rate of £275 per half day.
 - Any additional time to school causing concern for reviewing and evaluating key documents, writing and QA'ing reports, and providing feedback e.g.

SSE/SDP/Subject plans would have to be charged as part of a traded package at the rate of £275 per half day.

- Brokering of formal federations, including support for legal processes, consultation papers, consultation support, support with meetings etc would have to be charged as part of a traded package at the rate of £275 per half day.
- Single point of contact (HSIS QA Link Inspector) for HT would not continue, but schools could access generic support through a central email.
- Support for HT recruitment process would have to be charged as part of a traded package at rate of £275 per half day.

The types of interventions and brokered support for schools identified as causing concern may also have to change. For example, an alternative to establishing a performance review monitoring process would be for the Local Authority to engage with the RSC, who would identify potential brokerage to an existing Multi-Academy Trust.

Safeguarding;

- Network meetings would be held on a termly basis to all Havering schools, and DSL communications would be limited to termly updates, including warnings and advice in response to local and national events/concerns; training opportunities; key projects etc.
- Provision of advice to all schools would be limited to email only.
- Policies and guidance documents that are updated regularly would be charged as part of an updated traded package, including Safeguarding & CP policy; Equality policy; Whistleblowing policy; Safer Recruitment guidance; Transgender guidance; First Day Calling policy etc.

As a small service, staff in HSIS deliver functions across job portfolios, with permanent team members being part-traded and part-statutory. There is a risk that uncertainty would result in staff leaving the service, taking with them valuable expertise and experience. This would also impact on aspects of the traded offer as costs for external providers are much higher, and this cost would need to be passed on to schools. For example, if HSIS have to commission external providers to deliver CPD sessions, subject traded support, reviews, networks, SIP'ing, etc., then these traded services also then begin to lack alignment with the core statutory services.

Next Steps:

Schools will be aware that the Local Authority has recently announced that it is seeking to review the current QA framework, and schools are asked to particulate in this review. This review will enable the Local Authority to identify the core statutory functions that need to remain, whilst also identifying activities that could be provided on a traded basis, or cease. This would ensure that the current level of de-delegation is not increased for 2023-24, and it is hoped that this could be reduced, or removed entirely as this would allow sufficient time for HSIS to transition their services.

As with other grants, such as the school-to-school support grant, expenditure and the impact will be reported through the appropriate Funding Forum meeting to ensure full transparency and accountability.