

Specialist Equipment Costs – Hearing and Visual Impairments

Key Messages

Forum members are asked to:

- Agree that mainstream schools or colleges contribute up to £1000 for HI and VI equipment costs from their notional SEN budget.
- Note the detail of the proposals as outlined below.
- Note that the Funding Working Group considered and gave input into these proposals at a meeting in March; and supports these recommendations.

1. Introduction/background

- 1.1. The deaf and hearing impairment service (HI) and visual impairment service (VI) are centrally funded through the high needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This is due to the nature of the needs being high cost and low incidence, meaning there is less distribution across Sheffield schools. The cost of all support from the services are funded centrally meaning that schools in general do not need to utilise their notional SEN funding to support HI and VI needs.
- 1.2. Access to specialist equipment is a right for children with disabilities under the Equalities Act and SEND Code of Practice. Equipment needs are identified by Teachers of the Deaf (TOD) and Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) from across the HI and VI services. Equipment is then bought and maintained by the services and provided into schools at no cost.
- 1.3. Covid-19 has taught us that children require effective equipment to access learning. This proposal recognises this and how equipment is used to support effective teaching and learning.

2. Proposal – contribution to costs

- 2.1. The Schools Forum is asked to agree that mainstream schools contribute up to £1000 for HI and VI equipment costs from their notional SEN budget.
- 2.2. The equipment will be sourced and maintained by the HI and VI service and would follow the child if they moved schools. The Council will take ownership and responsibility for the equipment including training for staff and ongoing maintenance and repair. Where equipment costs less than £1000, the school

would pay the actual costs. Where the equipment costs more than £1000 the school would pay £1000 only.

- 2.3. HI equipment is mainly provided in primary schools. This includes an upgrade for children in Year 6 in preparation for secondary school and so it is suggested that this cost is requested off the secondary school who will be receiving the child.
- 2.4. This is not being requested for children in an integrated resource or specialist provision where equipment would continue to be funded by the HI and VI service budgets.
- 2.5. This approach would be a compatible approach to other Local Authorities:

'In many areas schools are required to make a contribution to the cost of equipment from their delegated funding. In many cases amount of contribution has been determined locally by each local authority as part of developing their accessibility strategies to comply with the planning duties to improve the accessibility of schools for disabled pupils set out in schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.' (National Sensory Impairment Partnership, 'Provision of equipment and technology for children and young people with a sensory impairment. Funding arrangements in the context of the Special Educational Needs Framework and the Equality Act 2010 (February 2017)').

- 2.6. Examples of other Local Areas who follow this approach are Leeds, Darlington, Wakefield, North Yorkshire, East Lincs.

3. Examples of specialist equipment and costs include:

Phonak Roger Radio aid systems for hearing impaired students	Transmitter - £547 Receivers - £510 x 2 Total - £1567
iPads used to produce accessible lesson notes, access to large print reading material, access using accessibility features	Standard iPad £400 iPad Pro with keyboard £850
Laptop with specialist screen reader software/ braille technology that allows access to computer	£500 laptop £200 software
Braille note touch	£4,595

Between April 2020 and January 2021, 26 children received support from the Hearing Impairment Service and 27 children received support from the Visual Impairment Service.

4. Recommendations

Forum members are asked to:

- **Agree** that mainstream schools and colleges will provide up to £1000 for the equipment required by a child with a hearing or visual impairment from notional SEN funding.
- Note that the equipment will follow the child.
- Note that the equipment will become the property of the HI and VI service who will ensure maintenance and training on it.
- Note that where equipment is upgraded for a secondary school placement, the secondary school will pay the cost of up to £1000.
- Note that where equipment needs to be replaced as it is no longer repairable, the school funds the new equipment.
- Note that where a small school has an unusually high number of children requiring equipment that would have a detrimental impact on a single year budget, individual discussions take place with the local authority on how it will be managed.