

**20. Are there aspects of the operation of the funding system that prevent young people from accessing the support they need to prepare them for adult life?**

Yes.

The overall inadequate level of funding, combined with a significant increase in the number of EHCPs nationally, means budgets are under more pressure than ever before. Decisions made on behalf of young people are too often made for financial reasons rather than in the best interests of young people. Funding pressures are having a negative experience on the student experience. A long-term, rigorously costed increase in the overall SEND budget is needed.

Variations in the supportiveness and knowledgeability of local authorities (LAs) mean that colleges have inconsistent experiences around the operation of funding. Some LAs do well in ensuring funding is administered efficiently with all elements of the EHCP considered within the funding bid.

Often LA SEND expertise is school focused which leaves post-16 providers feeling under-supported and exposed. Coordination with the LA is often not as effective as it should be. For example, colleges report that some LAs employ EHCP Administrative staff who do not have a working knowledge of SEND in a post-16 context, or how college funding operates. This leads to EHCPs with inappropriate outcome measures, that are not tailored appropriately to post-16 settings. Colleges then have to counter-offer EHCP's with services they reasonably can provide, and make agreements outside of the documents.

LAs do not always finalise the EHC plan in time for the 31st March deadline. Delayed payments have a knock-on effect for colleges that need to buy and put in place resources. Young people lose out as they have to start their post-16 education without having access to the support they are entitled to.

There are also inbuilt financial risks for the college in enrolling students on an EHCP. If the student then changes their mind or fails to meet the entry requirements, the funding won't follow even though the resources are in place.

Colleges cite reluctance by LAs to support anything other than direct marginal costs. Colleges report that some LAs are struggling to fully implement the EHCPs as they are not working efficiently with health and social care making it harder to support students with specific needs.

**21. Notwithstanding your views about the sufficiency of funding, please describe any other aspects of the financial and funding arrangements that you think could be amended to improve the delivery of provision for young people with SEN.**

Administration

The entire system is too admin heavy and time consuming. A speedier and more flexible process would help. The admin burden entails hiring additional staff, or pulling staff away from other duties, which leads to more expense for colleges at a time of overall financial stress.

Element 2 funding

Many colleges feel that the lagged Element 2 funding is not working effectively. Colleges report having to 'fight' to get their funding increased to recognise actual delivery. Colleges are concerned about the artificial pressure to 'make the funding reach' the £6001 mark so Element 3 can be initiated and the E2 claimed. It would be more effective to scrap the E2 funding element and funding provided to reflect the actual costs of provision.

**22. If you are able to provide any examples where local authorities and colleges have worked together effectively to plan provision to meet the needs for SEN support and high needs, please describe these below.**

Comments

Overall, colleges that have effective working relationships with their local authority attribute this to the LA being responsive and flexible with changing needs. For example, effective LAs are quick at transferring funding applications across institutions if needed. Effective LAs are also quick at decision making, which in turn helps colleges avoid the need to put in interim support measures without funding.

Some colleges have spoken very positively about working with the LA to produce very tailored and complex support packages for students. Effective LAs have good specialist knowledge about SEND and post-16 provision, and good understanding of funding mechanisms in mainstream post-16 institutions.

**23. Are the current funding or financial arrangements making early intervention and prevention more difficult to deliver, causing costs to escalate?**

Yes.

The overall inadequate levels of SEND funding for schools and colleges has a negative impact on intervention and prevention at all stages. A significant increase in the number of EHCP received nationally places further administrative and financial burdens on institutions at a time of unprecedented financial constraint. Parents lack confidence in the ability of schools and colleges to deliver non-statutory SEN support, which has contributed to the rise in EHCP requests. Unsurprisingly, the squeeze in SEN funding and support simply leads to more expensive and resource-intensive interventions further down the line.

Late diagnosis of needs in schools, combined with the increase in the numbers of EHCPs, means that colleges are having to provide more costly and resource intensive solutions at a point in a student's education where it can be more difficult to effect change.

As student numbers increase colleges report running year on year at a loss.

**24. If you can you provide examples of invest-to-save approaches with evidence that they can provide value for money by reducing the costs of SEN support, SEN provision or other support costs (e.g. health or social care) later, please describe these below.**

Examples provided by sixth form colleges in this area tend to relate to consolidating or sharing provision:

College example 1: We provide a shared provision for students with Autism Spectrum Condition for lunch / social interaction and study time. This is shared between the number of

ASC students attending each year. It then enables us to provide additional staff for these services without it being onerous or allotted to one individual.

College example 2: We provided shared provision – we have a student whose health is fragile – we provide a reduced curriculum at the College which is backed up by a specialist provider who supplies home tuition.

**25. If you think there are particular transition points at which it would be more effective to access resources, please indicate below those you believe would be most effective to focus on.**

As specialist post-16 providers, colleges understand the importance of the transition from secondary school to FE/sixth form. This transition can be particularly challenging for SEND students due to the greater independence expected in the college environment. In the longer-term view, however, improving transition points at the youngest possible age would eventually create positive results throughout the entire system.

The transition from education to adult services can be a difficult time for students. This could be improved through better engagement of social care workers, and ensuring they always attend key transition meetings. Colleges also report that there are insufficient resources for the transitions into employment or tertiary education when the student leaves college.

**Small pots of money focusing on improving particular transition points are not in anyone's long term interest. The crisis of funding in SEND can only be solved through a properly costed, long-term funding settlement.**