



Consultation on the Special Provision Capital Fund

The Council has a £1 million capital fund to spend to increase the number of places or improve facilities for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. We want to know how you think this money should be spent and whether you have any schemes of your own that could be supported from this fund.

Introduction

Walsall Council has statutory responsibilities to keep special educational provision under review and to ensure there are enough places to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in Walsall.

We are currently helping to increase the numbers of places at special schools in Walsall, with nearly 130 additional places being created over the next two years, and potentially more in the future. The special schools expansions are made possible through a capital grant from central government called Basic Need. Basic Need funds new school places for children and young people of statutory school age (5-16 years) in mainstream and special schools.

However, to help develop provision for children and young people with SEND even more, we will receive a further government grant called the **Special provision fund of £1million** over a three year period.

Local authorities can invest in new places and improvements to facilities for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream and special schools, nurseries, colleges and other provision.

The grant is just under £1 million for Walsall (£957,686) over three years (£319,229 a year) for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21. The first year is the new financial year starting in April.

The total value of the Fund in England is £215m. Every local authority's allocation is at least £500,000. It is allocated largely on the basis of the rate of population growth. The allocations are in addition to the Basic Need capital funding for new school places.

It is intended to develop provision for pupils with more complex SEN (i.e. children or young people with an Education Health and Care Plan or a statement) who are in mainstream or special schools. It is capital spend – the benefit lasts longer than a year.

Local Authorities are free to spend it on other education based provision across the range of providers where this meets local needs, including nurseries, independent non maintained special schools and FE colleges Since 2014, 'SEN' is now understood in terms of educational provision in the age range 0 -25 years.

Guidance

The Department for Education issued Guidance on the use of the Special Provision Fund in August 2017. You can read it here:



Special-Provision-Capital-Fund-Guidance.pdf

Or go to a report to Schools Forum on 16 January 2018 via the Council's website:

<https://cmispublic.walsall.gov.uk/cmis/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2636/Committee/361/Default.aspx>

The DfE give examples of how the Special provision fund might be used:

- 'Expand outstanding special provision that helps children attend school in the local area so that children gain independence within their local community.
- Add resourced provision to a successful mainstream school.
- Set up a new learning kitchen to teach pupils the skills they need to be independent in adulthood and skills that can support them in employment'.

But they say that the funding is not intended for:

- 'Higher education including universities and other higher education provision
- Any provision for those aged 25 and over.
- Expanding provision specially to create additional places for pupils who do not have education, health and care plans.
- Reasonable adjustments that schools are required to fund as part of the accessibility requirements. This includes ramps or widening doorways.
- Revenue expenditure such as furniture (chairs, desks), teaching apparatus such as white boards, training or staff costs.
- Individual mobility equipment such as wheelchairs. However, local authorities can spend this funding on capital installations such as ceiling hoists for lifting non-ambulant children into a hydrotherapy pool.
- Maintenance work, which will be covered by Devolved Formula Capital funding'.

While £1m is 'generous', we recognise there are a lot of providers in Walsall who may benefit from this Fund. (A 3-4 classroom extension at one special school can cost up to £1m for instance). The priority is to support children and young people with higher levels of special educational needs and disabilities. Around 1,800 children and young people have Education Health and Care plans or statements of special educational needs that are maintained by Walsall Council. It is possible that the fund could part fund or match fund schemes for which other funding streams are available.

Next Steps

Let us know what you think.

And, if you have a potential scheme in mind that you think would qualify, please give us an expression of interest.

After that we will consider the responses and produce a plan that suggests how the Special provision fund might be spent.

In March, we will publish that plan on the Local Offer and consult further.

That will enable us to draw down the first year's worth of funding in the autumn term.

Details of how to respond

The consultation period begins on 26 January 2018 and ends on 2 March 2018.

More information from: Claire Goss, Head of SENDI (Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Inclusion), Tel: 01922 655761; Email Claire.goss@walsall.gov.uk or from Philip Wells, SENDI projects manager, Tel: 01922 655897; email Philip.wells@walsall.gov.uk

Responses in writing to:

Ms Alex Haigh

Admissions and Pupil Place Planning

Zone 2E, Civic Centre

Darwall Street, Walsall WS1 1TP

Or, by email to: alex.haigh@walsall.gov.uk