

# Annex C - FVS Response to Additional Needs Funding Proposal

Family Voice Surrey (FVS) sits on the Schools Forum as the representative voice for parent carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

As the official parent carer forum for Surrey FVS has a responsibility to maintain independence and objectivity by working with Surrey families and other representative groups whilst keeping a national perspective through membership of the National Network of Parent Carer Forum. FVS has an agreement with Surrey County Council that recognises the value of FVS independence and responsibility to place the interests of parent carer members first.

While Local Authority budgetary decisions sit outside FVS remit, the impact of any proposals and public consultations on our members cannot be underestimated. The recent schools funding proposal consultation has sparked considerable concern within the local SEND community which needs to be addressed.

Upon due consideration and having sought opinions that are representative of our Member community, FVS feel that the following points should be taken into consideration before making a decision on this proposal.

## 1) Supporting schools to become more inclusive

We absolutely welcome the principle by which mainstream schools should be as inclusive as possible and support the council's transformation programmes to enable such inclusion to be embedded in mainstream provision. While this is referenced in the documentation that accompanies this consultation, it's not made clear how schools will be supported to do this and how removal of additional needs funding will improve inclusion.

Feedback from families: The understanding within the community is that this proposal seeks to remove funding from schools that was dedicated to those children with complex additional needs. As a result, the community feels that the proposal is at odds with the councils plan for greater inclusion.

## 2) Impact assessment

We are concerned at the lack of apparent strategic level impact assessments available to examine as part of the documentation. We would expect the council to have performed a top-level equality's impact assessment as part of their proposal, but it is unclear as to whether this has been carried out. It is unsurprising to us that the schools receiving this funding show high levels of SEND but not necessarily high levels of deprivation or ethnic minorities represented.

Feedback from families : What is unclear is how loss of this funding might impact the children both in direct receipt of this funding due to their EHCPs and those on SEND support.

## 3) Timing and the impact of the COVID crisis

We have deep misgivings about the timing of this action in light of the current phase of the pandemic and its impact on schools. The council is putting the onus on individual schools to prove whether withdrawal of funding would have a negative and destabilising impact on the school as a whole, This is a significant piece of work to ask of a school at a time when resources are stretched to their limits.

Feedback from families: Our members have been generous in sharing their experiences of school life during the pandemic and while we have some examples of wonderful practice, and schools going above and beyond to support children with additional needs, it is abundantly clear that supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities at this time is particularly challenging. As a forum we are concerned that schools should be focusing on meeting the needs of those children rather than embarking on administrative exercises.



We would like to thank the Schools Forum for its consideration of points raised by the SEND community. While it is not in our remit to make budgetary decision's on behalf of the Local Authority the public nature of this consultation is such that the community will expect and deserve a comprehensive justification for any decision that the forum makes with regards to this proposal. We would welcome such communication and would ask that it be presented in simple, clear and inclusive language.