

<h1>BRIEFING</h1>	TO:	Rotherham Schools' Forum
	DATE:	12 th June 2026
	LEAD OFFICER:	Cary Anne Sykes, Head of SEND
	TITLE:	Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Funding Model, Decision making and Links to Section F

1. Background	
1.1	<p>Purpose of the Paper</p> <p>This briefing paper provides Schools Forum with a clear overview of how Rotherham's EHCP top-up funding model works, how funding decisions align with Section F of EHCPs, and how the Graduated Response and Thresholds of Need guidance influence statutory assessment and resourcing decisions.</p> <p>Key point of fact, the funding model has not changed.</p>
1.2	<p>Government White Paper and Mainstream Inclusion</p> <p>The UK Government's Schools White Paper 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' (2026) outlines a long-term plan to improve SEND support and increase mainstream inclusion. It sets expectations for high-quality adaptive teaching and a universal offer of support in all schools.</p>
1.3	<p>Need to Develop Inclusion in Mainstream Schools</p> <p>The White Paper emphasises a system where most children with additional needs can be supported in mainstream settings, with statutory processes reserved for the most complex cases. This includes investment in resources, guidance, and national expectations for strong SEND practice.</p>
1.4	<p>New Support Plan Model (Individual Support Plans)</p> <p>A core reform is the introduction of new Individual Support Plans (ISPs), a digital record of a child's needs and day-to-day support, developed by schools in partnership with parents. ISPs will be mandatory for all children with SEND as part of the new three-tier support system (Targeted, Targeted Plus, Specialist). We fully recognise the increasing financial pressures on mainstream schools, especially around staffing and complexity of need. These challenges are being seen nationally and locally. While the Local Authority must operate within a statutory funding framework, we continue to review our model and work with schools to ensure it remains fair and evidence based.</p>

2. Key Information

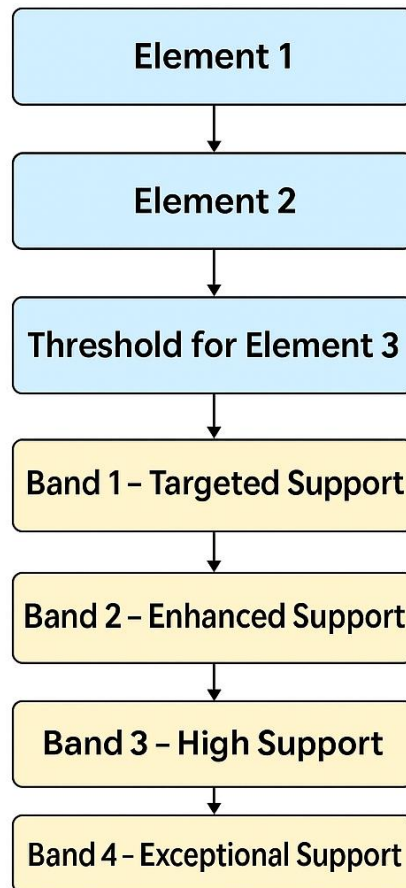
2.1 National Funding Context

Mainstream schools are funded through Element 1 core funding and Element 2 notional SEN funding. Top-up funding (Element 3) is provided when provision exceeds £10,000 per year as defined nationally.

2.2 Rotherham EHCP Top-Up Funding Model

Rotherham uses a banded model aligned with Threshold 4 of the Thresholds of Need guidance. Band levels include Targeted, Enhanced, High, and Exceptional Support, with defined indicative funding levels.

2.3



2.4 Relationship Between Funding Decisions and Section F of the EHCP

Section F specifies detailed, quantified provision linked to Section B needs. Funding bands follow the provision required, ensuring funding is tied to the child's assessed needs.

2.5 Links to the Rotherham Graduated Response and Thresholds of Need

The Graduated Response sets expectations for universal, targeted, and enhanced support prior to statutory assessment. Thresholds of Need provide clarity about what constitutes 'additional to or different from' provision at Threshold 4.

Examples of Section F and Funding Alignment

Band 1 – Targeted Support (£956) Example:

The pupil receives 3 x 20 minutes weekly literacy intervention, daily visual

supports, SALT strategies 3 times weekly, and access to a quiet regulation space. This aligns with targeted adult support for part of the week.

Why this aligns with Band 1

- Support is targeted but not continuous, matching the Band 1 description (e.g., targeted adult support for some of the week.)
- Requires periodic staff training and some additional materials.
- Provision is still relatively *light-touch*, appropriate within mainstream inclusion expectations where schools deliver early, adaptive support.

Band 2 – Enhanced Support (£2,868) Example:

Daily structured group work, supported transitions twice daily, anxiety management check-ins, OT/SALT strategies implemented daily. Aligns with daily structured support and supervised small group work.

Why this aligns with Band 2

- Provision includes **daily structured support**, small-group work, and anxiety/organisation help, all matching Band 2 descriptors (e.g., “daily structured support”, “supervised small group work”, targeted transition support).
- This level fits the **Targeted / Targeted Plus** tiers in the new White Paper model, where schools receive additional support via Experts-at-Hand services in mainstream settings.

Band 3 – High Support (£5,736) Example:

Full-time in-class support, daily 1:1 regulation sessions, continuous scaffolding, personalised sensory tools, and transition support every lesson. Matches full-time in-class support and daily EHCP strategy implementation.

Why this aligns with Band 3

- Requires **full-time in-class support**, matching Band 3 criteria (e.g., “full-time in-class support”, “daily implementation of EHCP strategies”, “supervised small group and 1:1 intervention”).
- Aligns with the **Specialist** tier in the new national SEND model, where intensive intervention is needed but the pupil remains in mainstream provision with significant additional support.

Band 4 – Exceptional Support (£7,648) Example:

Continuous 1:1, personalised curriculum, 3 daily 1:1 intervention sessions, therapeutic programme implementation every lesson, and personal care support. Matches continuous support and therapeutic facilitation.

Why this aligns with Band 4

- Matches Band 4 descriptors (“continuous in-class support”, “personalised curriculum”, “support with emotional regulation”, “facilitation of therapeutic interventions”).
- Reflects the White Paper’s **Specialist Provision Package** tier, at the highest level of mainstream support before specialist placement is required.

Unstructured Time Supplement Example:

Supervised support for entire break and lunch (75 minutes daily) due to safety and regulation risks. Aligns with unstructured time support funding line.

Why this aligns with the Unstructured Time funding line

- Clear evidence of need specifically **during unstructured times**, referenced directly in the funding table (“evidence from reports that a need for support at unstructured time is required”).

Summary for Schools Forum

Rotherham’s funding model ensures transparent, equitable decision-making based on assessed need, with Section F as the legal driver of funding and Thresholds of Need guiding expectations around provision and evidence.

3 Key Discussions

3.1 Acknowledgement of Pressures on Schools

The Local Authority recognises the financial pressures facing schools, particularly rising staffing and provision costs associated with supporting children and young people with SEND. These pressures reflect well-documented national challenges, including sustained growth in EHCP numbers and increasing financial strain on local authority High Needs budgets, as identified in national parliamentary analysis.

However, it is important to emphasise that these pressures are systemic and national in scale, not specific to Rotherham’s funding model.

3.2 National Framework Governing Local Funding Models

Local Authorities must operate within a statutory national funding framework. Under national funding rules:

- Schools must fund the first £6,000 of additional SEND support from their delegated budgets.
- Local Authorities provide Element 3 (High Needs) top-up only for provision that exceeds £10,000 per pupil per year.

This framework is set by central government and is not within the Local Authority’s control. The local banding model is a mechanism for ensuring transparent, equitable and consistent allocation of top-up funding above that national threshold.

3.3 Alignment with the Government’s SEND Reforms

The 2026 SEND White Paper *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* sets out a long-term national strategy to ensure that:

- Most children with SEND should have their needs met within mainstream schools, through high-quality adaptive teaching and strong universal provision.
- Statutory processes should be reserved for the most complex cases.
- A revised tiered system of support (Targeted, Targeted Plus, Specialist) will underpin this approach.

The White Paper also outlines new national supports designed to increase mainstream capacity, including the Inclusive Mainstream Fund and Experts at

Hand, which will strengthen schools' ability to meet needs without reliance solely on EHCP-linked funding.

These reforms reinforce the principle that top-up funding is not intended to cover all staffing or operational costs, but to supplement the mainstream entitlement where needs exceed ordinarily available provision.

3.4 Purpose and Integrity of the Local Banding Model

Rotherham's EHCP funding model is built upon the **Thresholds of Need** framework and specifically aligns to **Threshold 4**, ensuring:

- **Consistency:** All decisions are made against clear, published criteria.
- **Fairness:** Schools with similar levels of need receive similar funding.
- **Legality:** Funding decisions reflect the *specific, quantified provision* in Section F of an EHCP, as required by the SEND Code of Practice.
- **Sustainability:** The Local Authority must ensure the High Needs Budget remains financially viable and compliant with statutory duties.

The banding model provides funding that is proportionate to the provision that is *additional to and different from* what is ordinarily available in mainstream settings.

3.5 Commitment to Ongoing Review

While the Local Authority must operate within national parameters, we remain committed to:

- Continuing dialogue with Schools Forum.
- Ongoing review of the banding model, including adjustments where feasible.
- Ensuring that top-up funding remains fair, transparent and reflective of assessed need.
- Responding to national reforms as they are implemented through to 2030.

4. Pressures

4.1 "The Local Authority recognises the pressures schools face, and we acknowledge that real-life staffing costs have increased. However, the EHCP top-up model operates within a national statutory framework, and local banding ensures equity, transparency and legal compliance.

Future government reforms will strengthen mainstream inclusion and introduce new funding streams specifically designed to support earlier intervention and reduce over-reliance on EHCPs.

Our priority is to ensure that resources are allocated fairly, based on assessed need and clearly specified Section F provision, while maintaining a sustainable High Needs system for all children and young people in Rotherham."

5. Finances

5.1 Section F as the Legal Determinant of Funding

EHCP funding must follow the provision specified in Section F, not school budgetary pressures.

The Local Authority has a legal duty to:

- Ensure the provision in Section F is delivered.
- Fund that provision at the appropriate band.
- Apply a consistent and evidence-led process for determining the necessary level of additional support.

Provision is funded at the band that corresponds to the frequency, duration and intensity of support required, as described and evidenced within the EHCP.

The model is therefore needs-led, not cost led.

5.2 Financial Sustainability Considerations

Schools Forum will be aware that the High Needs Block is subject to significant national pressure, with rising demand for statutory provision reported across England.

The Local Authority must balance the need to support individual pupils against the wider need to maintain system-level sustainability and protect services for all children and young people with SEND.

The funding model enables the Local Authority to meet statutory requirements while maintaining a financially responsible position.

6. Recommendations

That the Schools Forum receive and note the content of the briefing.