

Terms of Reference – Pyramid Funding Panels

1. Background

The Pyramid Funding Panels bring together partners from within the Local Authority and schools/settings, who will work together to deliver our shared vision, values, and priorities to improve services and outcomes for Children and Young People across Doncaster. These Panels will:

- Provide a robust and transparent decision-making process for allocation of High Needs Funding at a local level for children and young people who require additional support within school. All panel decisions will be made as a result of co-production between schools and the Local Authority.
- Ensure that there is local involvement in this process as well as involvement from a range of educational professionals.

The panel considers applications for High Needs Funding from schools and challenges, approves and reviews any resource implications for Children and Young People. Panel members will ensure all information is available to enable effective decision-making. Without relevant timely information, decisions cannot be made. Where there are significant levels of need identified at a Specialist Level using The Needs Descriptors and decisions require a higher level of funding than can be allocated at Pyramid Funding Panel this panel can make a recommendation for escalation to The Complex Needs Panel for review and decision.

2. Vision

The vision is set out in the Education and Skills Strategy 2030 for '***Equitable and inclusive lifelong learning that empowers people to fulfil their aspirations and thrive in life and work***'.

The SEND Partnership Strategy, overseen by the SEND Partnership Board is aligned to the above and identified the following key priorities.

- Priority 1: To ensure that there is a consistent approach to identifying and assessing the needs of young people, which is centred around their needs and aspirations



- Priority 2: To ensure that all Doncaster settings effectively meet the needs of students who have SEND
- Priority 3: To deliver positive, well-planned transitions for young people with SEND to ensure that they are prepared for adulthood
- Priority 4: To improve the use of information across the partnership to better inform strategic planning and joint commissioning for children and young people with SEND

Local Partnership Funding Principles

- City of Doncaster Council (CoDC) distribute money in a fair and logical way;
- CoDC distribute extra resources towards pupils who need them most;
- CoDC SEND funding arrangements are transparent and easy to understand and explain;
- Support a diverse range of school provision; and provide value for money and ensure proper use of public funds.
- Funding can be allocated without the need for an EHCP.
- Changes in need can be funded quickly.
- Collective responsibility for High Needs Funding
- Ensure sustainability of school and HN funding.

3. Scope

The key aim of the panel is to consider funding requests for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and/or other categories of needs which are over and above the base funding model. This includes the following:

- Funding requests for individual children and young people with SEND in a mainstream setting; use of notional and requested funding within the parameters of this panel (see guidance document). In rare and exceptional circumstances, where there are high levels of need identified at a Specialist Level using The Needs Descriptors and provision cost exceeds that which can be allocated at PFP, the panel may decide to recommend an escalation to The Complex Needs Panel.
- Funding requests for group interventions for children and young people with SEND in mainstream setting to support classroom provision for a group of young people with similar needs in order to ensure that they are able to make progress without any further escalation. This would require an appropriate minimum SEND Notional contribution of 40%. In rare and exceptional circumstances, when requests for more complex interventions are received, panel may decide to recommend an escalation to The Complex Needs Panel.

4. Objectives of the Panel

The Pyramid Funding Panels will:

- Commit to meeting needs across the city and achieving the best possible outcomes for all children and young people in Doncaster.
- Always prioritise the greatest need and not solely advocate for their own schools.
- Recognise the impact of contextual factors when considering applications and not just levels of pupil need including but not limited to: current levels of funding, SEND K and EHCP data, EHCP costs and any increase/ decrease from previous year.
- Commit to the effective use of all available budgets, including school notional budgets.
- Ensure that public money is allocated fairly and proportionately, in the spirit of collective responsibility. Distributing resources in this way will support Schools Forum in protecting school budgets from contributing towards alleviating a local high needs deficit.
- Where continuation is requested, schools must demonstrate the impact of previous allocations to the satisfaction of panel and any specialist teams involved with the CYP.
- Recognise the need to respond to contingencies as they arise (and ensure that there is sufficient funding and capacity available within the system to allow for this).
- Share good practice and knowledge with and learn from other Pyramid Funding Panels.
- Commit to reducing use of surplus resources (so that these can be reallocated as needed).
- Ensure the delivery of quality, consistent interventions to drive improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Ensure that the lived experience of children and young people with SEND is represented and that their needs are met through the effective delivery of the SEND support they receive.
- Ensure that children and young people receive the right support, in a timely manner and of the right quality.
- Effective decision-making regarding allocation of resources in-line with the vision, to ensure children will have positive placements with appropriate levels of support.
- Enable themes and trends analysis to aid longer term planning and profiling of need, to ensure effective commissioning of services through value for money quality resource allocation. This will be done through quarterly reports

5. Pre-Panel Authorisation of Cases



All cases presented must be completed by the school SENDCO, who must determine that all possible options have been explored and demonstrate value for money. Failure to do so will result in the cases not being considered unless in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances will be articulated by the Panel Facilitator. Cases will be triaged prior to panel by the Pyramid SENCo and School Improvement Advisor for each pyramid.

Members of the Panel:

- Facilitator- Pyramid SENDCO
- Locality School Improvement Advisor for Inclusion and SEND
- **One** SENDCO Representatives from each of the schools within the Pyramid.
- Educational Psychology Service
- Other relevant SEND Support Services (e.g. BOSS, ASCETS, services to support hearing impaired/visually impaired etc.)
- **Any school/academy trust representative not included in the above panel attendees list are not eligible to attend the Pyramid Funding Panel meetings.**

6. Support to the Panel:

- School Improvement Advisors for Inclusion and SEND
- Pyramid SENDCO
- Funding panel Co-ordinator (where available to attend)

7. Quorum

- Meetings will be quorate when attended by the Pyramid SENDCO plus five members. This must include at least one Local Authority representative, with the majority of schools represented. Final decisions will be reached by consensus by schools who are present supported by LA representatives.

- Non-attendance will require delegation of membership to individuals within the named service/school who have sufficient knowledge, experience and authority to make decisions.

8. Data Sharing

All members of the panel will be bound by the Council's Information Governance arrangements, including information sharing agreements and have up to date information governance training. Additionally, all panel members will be required to sign a code of conduct which includes data protection principles.

9. Emerging Needs Panels

Emerging Needs Panels will take place on a termly basis. These panels will consider changes to funding where there is a significant and sudden change in the level of need or where a child or young person is new to setting and will require interim arrangements.

10. Expectations of members

- Attend as a priority, participate actively in meetings and take responsibility for joint decision making, even when they do not have a need for support.
- In the event of non-attendance, it is expected that the member will provide a deputy with suitable knowledge, experience and the ability to make decisions on resourcing and provision as a full member of the panel. In exceptional unavoidable circumstances it is essential that schools communicate their absence using the panel email address.
- Ensure confidentiality of discussions and decisions taken within the group.
- Consider the needs of the child/young person in accordance with The Needs Descriptors and that provision is accurate and detailed to match those needs. Where needs can be met through less expensive provision or by deploying different strategies, this should be discussed and agreed by panel.
- Consider if funding is appropriate and determine the amount and length of the allocation (normally 3 terms) where the child/young person is at Targeted Plus Level or above as per the Graduated Approach (detailed within the SEND Toolkit)
- For children/young people who do not meet Targeted Plus Level or above, agree the provision of additional support from support services as required.
- Provide challenge and support to all members of the group.
- To attend panel on a regular basis and send an appropriately briefed deputy in case of non-attendance.
- To undertake any follow-up actions as agreed in panel.
- Where appropriate SENDCOs will share outcomes with parents and families following confirmation from CoDC.

11. Administration

- Meetings will be arranged by the Pyramid Lead SENDCO supported by the Funding Panel co-ordinator and the locality SIA.
- Attend panels where possible and take note of apologies and any deputies attending.
- Maintain a record of decisions taken/actions required/additional support or any comments to be communicated to schools/officers during the Panel.
- Post panel, following confirmation of all decisions and actions by the facilitator, communicate these to schools and Finance Teams, together with any further professionals required to support.

12. Governance

The Pyramid Panel will:

- Be accountable to Schools Forum for ensuring that mainstream top-up funding is used in a fair and effective way.
- Be monitored and evaluated through the work of the Schools Forum and the High Needs Funding Subgroup

Updated – 13th August 2025

Next Review Date – 13th August 2026