



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 19 June 2014**  
**Your comments must reach us by that date**

# **Savings to the Education Services Grant for 2015-16**

If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: [www.education.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations)

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

<b>Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: Jackie Conway	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name of Organisation (if applicable): Schools Forum – Stockton on Tees	
Address: Elaine Barrett – Secretary to Schools Forum Education Centre Junction Road Norton	

Stockton on Tees  
TS20 1PR

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please mark the box the best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	Academies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local authorities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governors	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bursars	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	School forums	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade union organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Please Specify:

In responding to the questions in this consultation, we ask you to pay particular attention to any potential impacts on the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 (sex, race, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment).

### School Improvement

- 1 a) How could the clarification of the role of local authorities in school improvement in Section 4.2 help local authorities to make savings?

Comments:

School Forum would prefer the element of support within School Improvement Services to remain. If LA School Improvement challenge was made to both Academies and Schools this may increase economies of scale. School Improvement affects LA Schools as they depend on their services.

- 1 b) Is further clarification or guidance from the Department on the role of the local authority in school improvement needed in order to have a clear set of expectations?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

A breakdown of the role of the LA would be beneficial with specific detail on SEN support services within School Improvement.

- 1 c) In addition to the examples set out in Section 3.2 of the consultation document, how else could local authorities provide school improvement more efficiently?

Comments:

Using school to school support more effectively although this requires an element of funding for the supporting school to release quality Teachers / Leaders. A quality assured brokerage system could be offered to procure services within the LA and externally. Improve School Improvement services capacity to challenge effectively

- 1 d) What level of saving is it possible for your local authority to make on school improvement? If cost pressures on school improvement have changed recently, please describe below.

Comments:

Significant savings have already been made within the LA. The growing number of Academies has impacted on the cost pressures but in order to grow an effective School Improvement we need to maintain the level of funding.

- 1 e) If your local authority's expenditure is above the median (£31 per pupil) for this service, can you help us understand why this is?

Comments:

No response.

- 1 f) What would prevent your local authority from reducing costs to match the lowest spending 25% of local authorities (up to £19 per pupil)?

Comments:

No response.

## **Statutory and regulatory duties**

- 2 a) Which statutory and regulatory duties require greater clarification or guidance?

Comments:

Clarity is required of the statutory and regulatory duties with reference to specialist services e.g. Exclusion and SEN. Clarity is needed to define how much of the grant is spent on statutory duties.

- 2 b) In addition to the methods set out in the case studies in Section 3.2, how else could local authorities fulfil statutory and regulatory duties more efficiently?

Comments:

Unable to respond as 2a.

- 2 c) What level of saving is it possible for local authorities to make on statutory and regulatory duties? If cost pressures on statutory and regulatory duties have changed recently, please describe below.

Comments:

Clarification is needed on statutory duties.

- 2 d) Do you think that the Department needs to change its expectations of local authorities with regard to statutory and regulatory duties in order for savings to be realised? If so, how?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

There is a need for definition between with the role of the LA / Academies / Commissioner. Responsibilities need to be clearly defined.

- 2 e) If your authority's expenditure is above the median (£48 per pupil) for this service, can you help us understand why this is?

Comments:

More information is required.

- 2 f) What would prevent your local authority from reducing costs to match the lowest spending 25% of local authorities (-£6<sup>1</sup> to £28)?

Comments:

More information is required.

## Education welfare services

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<sup>1</sup> We do not know at this stage why this local authority has recorded a negative planned expenditure on this service and we will explore this during the consultation period.

3 a) Why do you think there is such significant variation in spending on education welfare?

Comments:

There are different needs within each LA and cohorts of children with SEN / vulnerable children. Deprivation is not taken into account in the ESG funding. Clarification again required for spending on statutory duties.

3 b) How do you think local authorities could provide this service more efficiently?

Comments:

In Stockton we have combined the education welfare and exclusions functions. There have been large EIT reviews already carried out in this sector to identify cost savings.

3 c) What level of saving could your local authority make to education welfare? If cost pressures on education welfare have changed recently, please describe below.

Comments:

We believe that current spending is at its floor level. We are already in a position where attendance issues are significantly more likely to create costs elsewhere in children's services, particularly in social care and youth offending. Raising the Participation Age has also added responsibilities for local authorities.

3 d) Is further clarification or guidance from the Department needed about our expectations in respect of education welfare services? If so, why?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

It would be helpful for the Department to spell out the responsibilities of schools and academies on attendance. There will be additional budget pressures with the SEN reform where parents may control the child's funding.

3 e) If your authority's expenditure is above the median (£14 per pupil) for this service, can you help us understand why this is?

Comments:

Stockton is already spending at a low level of £14 per pupil.

- 3 f) What would prevent your local authority from reducing costs to match the lowest spending 25% of local authorities (£0 to £9)?

Comments:

Stockton is a large diverse Borough with pockets of high deprivation.

- 3 g) Do you agree that the duties required for this service are fulfilled by local authorities, and therefore should be covered by the local authority retained duties funding (set out in Section 6)? If not, which aspects do academies hold responsibility for and should therefore be paid for by the standard ESG rate?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Greater clarification is needed to highlight Academy responsibilities with regards to statutory duties, e.g. Educational Psychology provision.

### Central support services

- 4 a) Are there any reasons why local authority expenditure on central support services could not be significantly reduced, if not stopped altogether? Please give details below.

Comments:

The main item of spend in Stockton covered in the area is Music Service net contribution totalling approximately £105k together with pupil and student support for disadvantaged children in terms of clothing grants and access to outdoor education.

The Tees Valley Music Service for which Stockton is the host has seen a significant reduction (i.e. reduction of £840k pa in Music Grant Funding which equates to 56% since 2011/12) in grant income and any reduction would further impact on the music curriculum and enjoyment that young people receive from it. If local authority funding is



also lost, access to musical tuition and a good music education will become the preserve of a few. Further, the successful delivery of the National Plan for Music Education will be jeopardised.

Any reduction in the other areas would be to the detriment of our disadvantaged and vulnerable young people.

- 4 b) If you do not think this could be stopped altogether, how much of a saving could local authorities make to these services? If cost pressures on central support services have changed recently, please describe below.

Comments:

We do not consider that any further savings can be made in this area. A large EIT review has already been undertaken in the music Service.

- 4 c) Is further clarification or guidance from the Department needed in order to have a clear set of expectations? If so, why?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

We do not see that there is anything to offer guidance on!

- 4 d) If your authority's expenditure is above the median (£6 per pupil) for this service, can you help us understand why this is?

Comments:

Stockton's spend is already close to this level.

- 4 e) What would prevent your local authority from reducing costs to match the lowest spending 25% of local authorities (-£10 to £1)?

Comments:

Please see response to 4a above.

## Asset management

5 a) Which services are your local authority funding under the 'Asset Management' heading?

Comments:

The LA Asset Management Team provide an excellent skilled service to Schools. They complete statutory responsibilities with regards to buildings and can support self financed school improvements

5 b) Could your local authority join up asset management relating to education with asset management across all local authority services, if this is not already happening?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

The team is already part of the wider council service and have an integrated approach to the council's strategic planning of school places.

5 c) Are there reasons why local authority expenditure on asset management, under the standard ESG rate, could not be significantly reduced if not stopped altogether? If cost pressures on asset management have changed recently, please describe below.

Comments:

We do not see how the function could not exist. The asset management function is a key element of the landlord responsibility for community and voluntary controlled schools and liaison with diocese over voluntary aided schools. Academies can still access the LA expertise. The change in asbestos regulations will impact on Asset Management.

5 d) If you do not think this could be stopped altogether, how much could local authorities save by delivering this service in a different way?

Comments:

Stockton's costs are very low at £4 per pupil. We do not believe significant savings are

feasible.

5 e) Is further clarification or guidance from the Department needed in order to have a clear set of expectations? If so, why?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

It is difficult to envisage what guidance could be helpful. But the Department could usefully carry out some evaluative research to understand local authority responsibilities in practice.

5 f) If your authority's expenditure is above the median (£7 per pupil) for this service, can you help us understand why this is?

Comments:

N/A

5 g) What would prevent your local authority from reducing costs to match the lowest spending 25% of local authorities (-£1<sup>2</sup> to £3)?

Comments:

This is slightly below Stockton's current spending level. We do not believe the benchmark is realistic because of differences in recording costs and lack of economies of scale for smaller authorities.

### **Premature retirement costs/ redundancy costs (new provisions)**

6 a) Are there any reasons why schools could not take financial responsibility for redundancies? Please give details below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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<sup>2</sup> We do not know at this stage why this local authority has recorded a negative planned expenditure on this service and we will explore this during the consultation period.

Comments:

Where failing Schools are forced to amalgamate, the receiving School should not have to fund the redundancy payments. If the LA has the legal right to do this then the LA should fund the payments.

- 6 b) If you are a local authority that is funding early retirement, why are you not requiring schools to do so?

Comments:

Stockton does not fund early retirement costs in schools.

- 6 c) If your authority's expenditure is above the median (£0 per pupil) for this service, can you help us understand why you are spending that amount and what prevents you from reducing your expenditure to £0?

Comments:

### **Therapies and other health-related services**

- 7 a) Given the high needs budget that local authorities have, and the improved joint working between health and education authorities which should result from the provisions within the Children and Families Bill, are there any reasons why funding for therapies and other health-related services should continue from ESG? If cost pressures on therapies and other health-related services have changed recently, please describe below.

Comments:

Stockton does not fund these costs from ESG as they are part of a child's high needs package.

- 7 b) Is there a need for further clarification or guidance from the Department about what local authorities are expected to provide in terms of therapies and other health-related services. If so, why?

Yes  No  Not Sure

Comments:

7 c) If your authority's expenditure is above the median (£0 per pupil) for this service, can you help us understand why you are spending that amount and what prevents you from reducing your expenditure to £0?

Comments:  
N/A

**Monitoring National Curriculum assessment**

8 a) What level of savings could local authorities make to this service?

Comments:  
Stockton does not fund these costs from this heading in ESG as they are part of the School Improvement Service costs.

8 b) If cost pressures on monitoring national curriculum have changed recently, please describe below.

Comments: There will be additional pressures on monitoring National Curriculum with the new framework and assessments from September 2014. This will incur more costs under the School Improvement Service SLA.

8 c) Is further clarification or guidance from the Department needed in order to have a clear set of expectations? If so, why?

Yes  No  Not Sure

Comments:  
It would help if more advance notice could be given of expectations and there were

fewer changes as a result of national processes. The more we can plan in advance the more cost effective our provision can be.

8 d) Given that some local authorities are charging for this service and not incurring any net expenditure, is this something your local authority could do? If not, please help us understand why.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

This is already budget neutral.

### How the savings will affect academies

9 a) What level of saving could your academy make by adopting some of the strategies we have set out in Section 5 of the consultation document?

Comments:

Academies already procure best value services.

9 b) Can you provide any additional examples of methods that academies can use to increase value for money from the ESG funding?

Comments:

Sharing resources across Academies and Trusts.

9 c) What would be the consequences of a less generous protection in 2015/16 for academies against losses in ESG than the protection offered in 2014/15?

Comments:

This would make budgets very tight and would have a significant impact on the services provided to the children. It would reduce the options to provide quality services as decisions would become purely cost driven. There would be an impact on the growth of the Academies.

**It was agreed that the word “savings” was in fact incorrect, the wording should say “cut”.**

9 d) What would be the consequences of reducing the academies rate of ESG to the local authority rate in 2015/16?

Comments:

There would be a direct impact on the provision of children's education. The rate of ESG provided to Academies would in fact be a bigger change as there were less economies of scale that are available to the LA Schools. The impact would be greater. There would be a push to increase the size of Trusts in order to improve any economies of scale.

### The local authority retained duties funding

10 a) What further savings could your local authority make from:

- i) education welfare services;
- ii) asset management; and
- iii) statutory and regulatory duties

As covered by the local authorities retained duties funding?

If cost pressures on the local authority retained duties have changed recently, please describe below.

Comments:

We believe Stockton's costs have been reduced to a realistic minimum through intensive reviews. Pressures on costs would remain unless there is a change to the statutory duties / responsibilities required of the LA.

10 b) Is further clarification or guidance about these duties from the Department needed in order to have a clear set of expectations? If so, why?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Clarification is needed with regards to funding for excluded pupils.

The Schools Forum agree that cuts in funding at the moment was not the right way to go. There needs to be a settled period of time to allow the original cut in funding to be analysed. It was agreed that how the ESG is spent with regards to School Improvement needs clarity although funds are still required to manage transition. Schools Forum

would like the remit to challenge ESG. Schools Forum disagree with the Dfe that savings will improve efficiencies. This will be detrimental to children's education.

Other Comments

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

**Please acknowledge this reply.**

E-mail address for acknowledgement:

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Aileen Shaw, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk)



**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 19 June 2014

Send by post to: Emily Barbour, Funding Policy Unit, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to: [esg.CONULTATION.education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:esg.CONULTATION.education.gsi.gov.uk)