

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO SCHOOLS FORUM

10th November 2025.

SECTION 19 SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN UNABLE TO ATTEND SCHOOL

SUMMARY

1. This report seeks Schools Forum's agreement to a proposal that schools provide a reasonable contribution from their School Budget towards the cost of Section 19 provision, where the child remains on roll of a school.
2. This funding will directly support the delivery of high quality, personalised education for children unable to attend school due to illness, anxiety, exclusion, or other exceptional circumstances, in line with the Council's statutory duties under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996.

RECOMMENDATION

3. To note the legal and policy context for Section 19 provision.
4. To consider the increasing demand and associated costs of Section 19 provision locally, regionally, and nationally.
5. To approve the proposal for schools to contribute from their School Budget (details as specified in the Financial Implications section below) for pupils accessing Section 19 provision whilst remaining on their school roll.

RATIONALE

Statutory Duty

6. Under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, local authorities must arrange suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, exclusion, or otherwise, may not receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made.

The duty is further supported by the following documents:

- Children and Families Act 2014 (Sections 42 and 61)
- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs - December 2023
- Arranging Alternative Provision (A Guide for Local Authorities and Schools) – February 2025
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)

Funding Principles

7. DfE guidance (Dec 2023) supports the principle that where a child remains on roll, schools may be asked to contribute a proportion of their funding, to ensure that funding follows the child and supports the local authority in providing the required suitable and adequate education.
8. This approach ensures equitable funding arrangements, shared responsibility between schools and the LA, sustainability of high-quality alternative provision and has recently been adopted by other Local Authorities with agreement of their School's Forums e.g. Wigan, Staffordshire.
9. This December 2023 guidance states 'Alternative provision for children with medical needs is funded from local authorities' high needs budgets. However, where a child remains on the roll of their home school but requires a period of time in alternative provision due to their health needs, the local authority and home school may wish to consider the transfer of a portion of the school's funding associated with that child to the alternative provision. This would ensure that the funding follows the child. This arrangement would cease when the child is reintegrated back to their home school or are no longer on the roll of the home school.'
10. As the above guidance states, the Local Authority can reach an agreement with schools for a contribution towards the cost of Section 19 provision. However, given the large number of schools within Stockton on Tees and the limited resources available in both the LA and school to do this on an individual basis, it is impractical to negotiate with each individual school on a per pupil basis and therefore the Local Authority proposes a collective agreement as detailed in the Financial Implications section below.

LOCAL, REGIONAL & NATIONAL CONTEXT AND RISING NEED

11. Stockton-on-Tees has seen a significant increase in referrals for Section 19 support, particularly for pupils with anxiety and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). Last year, two additional agency teachers were secured by the council to support the rising demand for Home and Hospital Service and for Section 19 provision for children moving into the borough and following permanent exclusion. Funding was provided from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
12. In the last academic year, 37% of persistently absent pupils had EHCPs, and 29.3% received SEND support.
13. Over 62% of children out of school for more than 15 days with an EHCP transitioned into specialist provision, with 67% of these into independent

placements. Without early intervention, this trajectory is expected to continue, increasing pressure on the High Needs Block.

14. National expenditure on the high needs block in respect of anxiety related support services and provision rose by £2.9 billion (+6.9%) in 2024–25, with a notable portion attributed to alternative provision and medical tuition.
15. Stockton's net expenditure on Alternative Provision rose from £1.5m in financial year 2023/24 to £2.6m in financial year 2024/25. This resulted in an overspend of c£1m in 2024/25, attributable to a significant increase in external tutoring costs plus further commissioned Pathway Development Centres,
16. Nationally, 28.5% of pupils were severely absent in 2022, up from 15% pre-pandemic and this has continued to grow. Anxiety is a leading cause of this increase.
17. The North East has one of the highest rates of persistent absence in England, with EBSA and anxiety cited as key drivers.
18. Severe absence in the SEND Support cohort has increased from 2.65% in 2021/22 to 4.01% in 2023/24. Stockton-on-Tees' figures are slightly below the North East and Statistical Neighbours for the most recent year, but the overall trend is rising. While levels are lower for EHCP pupils, this suggests a need for earlier intervention before instances escalate.
19. Severe absenteeism for pupils with an EHCP increased in Stockton-on-Tees from 6.0% in 2021/22 to 7.3% in 2023/24, and our rate is higher than the North East, Statistical Neighbours and England in the most recent recorded year.
20. In Stockton on Tees, support for anxious pupils is provided primarily via Home and Hospital Teaching Services and the Anxious Pupil Unit at Stockton Sixth Form College, Endeavour. This provision is subject to quality assurance checks. The proposed expansion of Endeavour was consulted on via procurement processes in October 2024 and the council have had in place a multi-agency working group, with school reps, since 2024 working towards an expansion of anxious pupil provision to meet the rising demands related to Section 19.
21. The Local Authority's policy on Section 19 is in the process of being updated and provides detailed guidance for schools and parents, including the role of the Local Authority when alternative education is to be considered and what reasonable steps should be taken and are expected prior to requesting Section 19 support.

PROPOSAL

22. It is proposed that the council's Section 19 expenditure will be redirected for the next two years to be delivered on a pilot programme, an enhanced expansion of Endeavour, which will introduce a bespoke service supporting pupils experiencing significant anxiety and emotional barriers to school attendance.
23. Over the next two years, the Council will invest a total of £950,000 in this pilot provision. This includes an existing annual High Needs funded commitment of £200,000 for the original Endeavour provision, supplemented by targeted one-off grant funding from the SEND & AP Change Programme and the Delivering Better Value in SEND initiative. These grants were awarded to support inclusive practice and reduce pressures on the High Needs Block.
24. The pilot enhanced Endeavour provision will include support for the following:
- Personalised education from Day 15 of absence for those with SEND and Anxiety.
 - Holistic support including mental health, family outreach, and reintegration planning
 - A tiered model of intervention with costs ranging from £150 to £650 per place per week depending on complexity and duration of placement. Please see appendix 1 scope and model.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

25. The proposal is for schools to contribute from their School Budgets towards the Alternative Provision costs. The contribution will be aligned to the period the pupil is not attending their school but is being educated through local authority commissioned provision (the "recoupment period").
26. The school contribution required will be based upon the start and end date of the commissioned provision, with contributions calculated pro-rata (Based on 52 weeks per financial year) to those shown in the table below.

Tier	School contribution required per pupil (pupil remains on roll) where the S19 AP provision is:	School contribution to SBC	Notes
1)	arranged directly by the school	£0	School funds directly
2)	for Yr 11 pupils accessing Tier 1 and Tier 2 support up to 12 weeks	£2,000 for 12 wks	
3)	for all other pupils accessing an in-reach placement for up to a full term (Tier 3)	£2,000 per term	
4)	for a pupil accessing a long-term intervention placement whilst in Key Stage 4 (Tier 4)	£6,000 per annum	

For example, a pupil attending Tier 2 support will be required to contribute £2,000 for a full 12 week intervention but only £1,000 for a 6 week intervention.

27. All schools will be charged on a termly basis, with maintained schools charged via an internal Journal against their school budget cost centre, and academies/academy trusts sent an Invoice.
28. Under the above arrangement, academy schools/trusts will be asked to provide a purchase order if possible. If no purchase order is provided, the local authority will quote the relevant academy, pupil's initials and date of birth on the invoice to enable schools to identify each charge to their budget and link it to an individual pupil.

GOVERNANCE & REVIEW

- a. The proposal aligns with Stockton's Section 19 Policy and SEND & AP Strategy.
- b. Oversight will be provided through the Local Area Inclusion Partnership and monthly assurance meetings.
- c. Impact evaluations will be submitted every 6 months by providers
- d. SEND Service will provide annual updates to Schools Forum

Attached: EBSA Spec v3 – Specification of provision offered by Endeavour from October 2025.

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