

LGA Special Interest Group: Annual Report to LGA Board 2020

SIG Name:	f40 campaign for fair school funding
Lead Member:	Chairman: Cllr James McInnes, Devon County Council
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<p>Membership</p> <p>As of 31 March 2020, f40 had 42 member authorities. Namely:</p> <p>Bath & North East Somerset Buckinghamshire CC Cambridgeshire CC Central Bedfordshire Cheshire East Cheshire West and Chester Cornwall County Council Derbyshire CC Devon CC Dorset CC East Riding of Yorkshire Council East Sussex County Council Gloucestershire CC Hampshire CC Herefordshire CC Kent CC Leicestershire CC Lincolnshire CC North Lincolnshire Council North Yorkshire CC Northamptonshire CC Northumberland Council</p>	<p>Oxfordshire CC Plymouth City Council Shropshire CC Solihull MDC Somerset CC South Gloucestershire Council Staffordshire CC Stockport MDC Suffolk CC Swindon Council Torbay Council Trafford MDC Wakefield MDC Warrington Council Warwickshire CC West Sussex CC Wigan MDC Wiltshire CC Worcestershire CC York City Council</p>
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<p>Aim</p> <p>To organise an all-party campaign for fairer and increased funding for schools in the worst funded authorities in England. Also campaigning for increased SEND funding, and changes to the SEND funding system, across England.</p>
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Key Activities / Outcomes of work undertaken

The f40 campaign group was launched more than 20 years ago with the aim of influencing significant change in the way Government allocates funding to local authorities and schools. The group is made up of 42 local authorities who are among the lowest funded for education in England.

f40 seeks fairness and equal opportunities in education for all children, regardless of where they live, and wishes to see schools properly funded and equipped to enable them to provide a quality education. The per pupil funding should be enough to actually run a school, before extra monies are added on.

Currently, there are too many discrepancies in the way funding is distributed, with some schools receiving substantially more per pupil than others. The historical proxy factors and add-ons that some schools receive need to be abolished. We appreciate that additional funds should be paid for deprivation, other additional educational needs and realistic area costs, but the base funding for every school should be the same.

This also applies to funding for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), which remains woefully insufficient to meet the growing demand, and is also unfairly distributed across the country.

f40 hoped that the case for fair school funding had been won as Government agreed that the funding allocation system was unjustifiable, and so introduced a National Funding Formula. However, we continue to have concerns as the new funding formula locks in some of the historic unfairness of the past.

We appreciate Government has started to look at levelling up funding between schools and local authority areas, but at the current rate it will take many years before there is true fairness across the country.

And while we are pleased Government pledged to boost education spending by £7.1bn in the autumn of 2019, which is a step in the right direction, once pay and pension rises have been taken into account, budgets will still fail to keep pace with the growing demands on schools.

We are working in collaboration with the National Education Union (NEU), National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and the Worth Less? campaign to lobby for sufficient funding for schools and SEND. We believe education needs an additional £5.5bn by 2023 to restore funding to previous levels.

Objectives

1 We are asking for urgent changes to the National Funding Formula to make it fairer, more easily understood and transparent. We seek the removal of the historic inequalities and funding protections in the system to ensure funding of schools is fair, regardless of where children live. We do not seek to remove additional funding that is paid for deprivation or realistic area costs.

2 We believe an additional £5.5bn is needed in education by 2022/23. This should be phased in during the next three years and cover Early Years, Primary and Secondary schools, 16-19 education, and High Needs up to the age of 25. A further £5.4bn is then required from 2023 to 2025 to meet the basic expectation on schools to ensure that every child is taught by a qualified teacher in classes of no more than 30 pupils.

3 We would like a commitment from Government to provide education funding on a continuous rolling three-year programme to enable schools to plan their budgets well ahead.

During the past year, working with the Collaboration Group, we have calculated how much additional funding we believe education needs during the next five years, and how much funding SEND requires. We have met with the DfE funding team twice to discuss these figures and are due to meet with them again (possibly remotely) in the next few weeks.

In early 2020, f40 also submitted an in-depth report to the Government review on SEND, outlining changes we believe need to be made to the way SEND is funded, along with the need for additional funding. This was completed with input from a number of our local authority members, many of which are experiencing deficit SEND budgets. As part of our submission to the SEND review, we met with Tony McArdle, Chairman of the SEND Leadership Board and an independent adviser to the Government Review to share our thoughts and concerns about the current SEND system, and we also sent a copy of our submission to the DfE and Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

We also carried out research among our 42 local authority members as to the breakdown of EHCP applications across school year groups to identify pinch points in the application system. We collected the data from our members to help us identify at what age children are when new EHCP applications are typically submitted and approved.

We are going to use the data to support reform in the HNB and will submit the information to the Government review on SEND to illustrate areas of high demand in the system.

During the past 12 months, we have also worked with MPs representing f40 constituencies to raise the profile of education funding, holding a briefing in the Houses of Parliament in May of last year.

We have also maintained our media relations at both national and regional levels.

F40 had planned to hold its biennial conference at the LGA in Westminster on March 10 this year, with a range of speakers organised and around 90 delegates due to attend. However, the decision was taken to postpone the conference due to the coronavirus. It has been rescheduled to take place in November 2020.