#  FUNDING FOR ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Permanent exclusions have risen steadily over the last three academic years, with 50 in total last year (2014-15). Assuming the budget allocation for 2016-17 will be the same as this year and that the number of permanent exclusions will be similar, the budget will need strengthening to support the proposed model by the amount of the one off payment last year (£200 000) and the actual year end overspend (forecast £420 000). This increase accounts in part for a possible further rise in permanent exclusions (ie the annual figure rising above 50).

Currently the EOTAS budget funds provision for pupils with health needs and those permanently excluded.  This is statutory provision from the LA and will continue into 2016-17 and beyond. From April 2015 to December 2015 there have been 29 permanent exclusions, and increase compared to the same period in previous years. The majority of pupils permanently excluded are predominantly in Year 10 (12 of the 29) and this is similar to previous years, but there has been an increase in younger pupils with 3 from Year 1.

Despite Schools’ forum agreeing in January 2015 to strengthen the EOTAS budget with a one off payment of £200 000 for 2015-16, the year-end forecast is still a large overspend.

**At risk of permanent exclusion**

The EOTAS budget also funds a model intended to prevent permanent exclusion whereby the LA contributes to the cost of alternative provision at a rate of £25 per day plus transport for pupils we agree are ‘at risk’.  In November 2015 we introduced controls on that budget, approved by Schools’ Forum, to try to reduce the year end budget forecast from £342 000 and ‘stretch’ the remaining budget to the end of the financial year (March 2016).

It is estimated that those controls will have some impact on reducing the year end forecast overspend if the number of pupils being permanently excluded does not rise significantly before March 2016.

**Proposal**

A revised model for supporting pupils at risk of permanent exclusion is proposed for the financial year 2016-17 to achieve greater impact from the EOTAS budget, to better support inclusive practice in schools/settings, and to improve outcomes for pupils. The proposed model is:

        To continue to support schools to prevent permanent exclusion, introduce clearer criteria for school and EOTAS to agree if an individual pupil is ‘at risk’ ie a threshold for accessing EOTAS funding.  Criteria should include evidence of inclusion support service involvement, impact of resources acquired from top up funding, progress data, number of fixed term exclusions, attendance (etc).  If the threshold is met, the EOTAS budget will fund £25 per day and a proportion of transport cost to implement an alternative education programme for pupils on an individual case basis. The EOTAS team will continue to co-ordinate the programme which will commence as soon as arrangements can be made. Schools/settings are invited to consult to agree the threshold criteria. If the threshold is not met and an alternative education programme is put in place, then the full cost of alternative provision and transport will be met by the school/academy.

       Contribution to transport cost will continue to be based on the current model after the new controls were introduced:

o   For pupils where the home to provision distance is less than 2 miles (up to and including Year 8 pupils) and 3 miles (from Year 9 to year 11) then parents will be responsible for transporting their children to the agreed education setting:

o   For pupils where the home to provision distance is over 2 miles (up to and including Year 8 pupils) and 3 miles (from Year 9 to Year 11) but less than 6 miles then the school/academy will pay for transport;

o   For pupils where the home to provision distance is over 6 miles then the school/academy will still pay the cost of the first 6 miles EOTAS budget will pay costs over that;

o   Bus passes will be issued (rather than using taxis) after appropriate risk assessments have been undertaken for individual pupils and accessible/appropriate routes are identified.

       Crucially it is anticipated that fewer pupils will meet the EOTAS threshold of ‘at risk’, (even though the number of pupils attending alternative provision might remain the same and be funded fully by school)s. Funding will therefore be diverted into paying SIPs to quality assure alternative providers.

* Schools will be re-imbursed by EOTAS on a monthly basis.

        Where the EOTAS team manager considers that an intervention in alternative provision should end then re-integration into school will be recommended.  If the school wishes to continue the alternative provision in these circumstances then the EOTAS budget will no longer make a contribution to the cost of the provision.

        The EOTAS contribution to alternative provision will cease if a pupil’s attendance is less than 50% over 10 consecutive days, unless there are mitigating circumstances such as health/medical needs.  These pupils will return to school unless the school continues to fund the provision in full or works with EOTAS to arrange another alternative package of support.