

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE
CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

14 March 2008

SCHOOL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To report on the award of school clothing allowance during 2007/2008 and to seek approval to a change in the criteria for eligibility of the school clothing allowance with effect from April 2008.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 In April 2007 the rate at which the school clothing allowance is paid to eligible families was increased from £55 to £60; the increase in the allowance had stemmed from a change in the eligibility criteria (April 2003) and a subsequent reduction in the number of claims submitted.

2.2 Currently, allowances are awarded to parents of pupils who are transferring from Primary to Secondary school (Yr 7) and from middle to high school (Yr 10) and who are in receipt of one of the following state benefits:-

- Income Support
- Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit where the parent is not entitled to Working Tax Credit and whose annual income (as assessed by the Inland Revenue) does not exceed £14,495 (amount subject to annual review)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit

It should be noted that the introduction of the Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit (April 2005) has had minimal effect on the number of claims received. Similarly, the number of applications under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 criterion has been negligible in recent years.

The current eligibility criteria for school clothing are identical to those for free school meals and assistance with residential visits.

2.3 Exceptionally, an allowance is paid outside of these eligibility criteria/year bands where a recommendation is received from an appropriate professional, for example, an Education Social Worker. In addition there is a separate sum of money held centrally for assisting eligible parents with the cost of clothing whose children attend residential special schools.

3.0 BUDGET 2007/2008

As identified in para 2.1 the change in the eligibility criteria (April 2003) has had a significant effect on the number of applications processed in recent years, as identified below:-

<u>School Year</u>	<u>No. of Claims</u>
2002/2003	1384
2003/2004	694
2004/2005	629
2005/2006	605
2006/2007	603
2007/2008	618

Appendix 1 provides an analysis of this year's payments. Most applications are received prior to the September transfer to secondary school so very few claims, if any, are expected in March.

It is envisaged that there will be a projected underspend of £3,344 within the Area Offices, and £9,660 retained centrally for Special Grant applications totalling £11,414 overall (approaching 20%).

4.0 CHANGES TO THE CRITERIA

School uniform plays a valuable role in contributing to the ethos and setting the tone of a school. Although the school clothing scheme is discretionary, the government recommends that assistance towards the cost of uniform should be afforded to children eligible for free school meals and children whose parents are entitled to the maximum level of working tax credit.

It is therefore proposed that with effect from April 2008 the criteria for school clothing (as shown in para 2.2) be changed by the additional criterion, namely:

Parents in receipt of their maximum level of working tax credit.

5.0 BUDGET 2008/2009

It is difficult to estimate the number of parents in receipt of Working Tax Credit who will apply for an allowance and to estimate the budgetary impact. It is therefore proposed that the current allowance of £60 be retained for 2008/2009. This would enable the Authority to issue in excess of 700 claims (i.e. approximately 100 additional allowances) and remain within budget. The position will be closely monitored during the year.

6. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

Security for All – by promoting safe, healthy and sustainable communities.	✓
Growing up prepared for the future – through good education and care and protection when it is needed.	✓

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That the current position be noted.
- 7.2 That the criteria for eligibility be revised by including those parents who are in receipt of their maximum level of working tax credit.
- 7.3 That the rate at which the Clothing Allowance is paid be retained at £60 for the 2008/2009 year.

CYNTHIA WELBOURN
 CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S SERVICE

Report prepared by Angela Walls, Access Support Manager

ConsultedExecutive Member

Date: 14 March 2008

ConsultedExecutive Member

Date: 14 March 2008

Action Agreed as above

.....Corporate Director

Date: 14 March 2008