Exceptional Review Process for SNA Allocations in Mainstream Classes in Primary and Post Primary Schools for 2022/23

31 May 2022   **Ref No: NCSE 02/2022**

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline to schools the exceptional review process for SNAs in mainstream classes in primary and post primary schools for the school year 2022/23 as set out in the Department of Education Circular 0035/2022.

Exceptional Review of Mainstream SNA Allocation 2022/23

Basis for Submitting an Application for Exceptional Review

The SNA allocations to the majority of primary and post-primary mainstream classes will be maintained at their current level for the 2022/23 school year from the date of Department of Education Circular 0035/2022. However, there may be exceptional circumstances in your school. In such a scenario, the Department of Education provides for a school to make an application for an exceptional review.

An exceptional circumstance is an unanticipated, unusual, or sudden event, beyond the school's control, which has had a significant impact on the primary care needs in the school, and as a consequence primary care tasks are not being met by the existing SNA allocation. For example, your school may currently have no SNA post and you have a newly enrolled student with significant primary care needs. Your school may be a developing school and have a significantly increased number of students with primary care needs. Your school may have SNA posts but an exceptional circumstance has arisen e.g. an intake of a disproportionate number of students with significant primary care needs.

Criterion for determining whether or not additional SNA posts may be required

There are significant unmet primary care needs within a school's overall population which cannot be met other than through additional SNA allocations.

Steps required before making an application

Before making an application a school needs to have undertaken the following steps:

- Engage with the school's local SENO and other relevant NCSE staff to review measures taken and to establish if there are other potential measures which could be considered by the school.

- Full review of the SNA requirements for each student's current primary care needs has taken place in the school following which the SNA resource has been effectively re-deployed starting with supporting students with the most significant primary care needs;

- Full review of the potential for school environment adaptations and/or the use of assistive technology and/or upskilling staff and/or alternative strategies to augment existing supports;

- Be able to demonstrate that, despite every intervention and strategy put in place to support primary care needs over the course of a reasonable timeframe, there continues to be unmet residual primary care needs;

Application Procedure 2022

Similar to 2021/22, applications should be made via the existing NCSE Schools Portal https://ncse.ie/school-support. If a school requires assistance accessing their account please follow support at https://ncse.freshdesk.com/support/login.

Processing of Applications

Priority consideration will be given to applications for the 2022/23 school year. In particular, applications from schools with no SNAs and developing schools will be prioritised and determinations made before 30 June 2022. Other applications will be processed in order of date received.

NCSE will review the overall primary care needs of students enrolled for 2022/23 and the totality of resources available to a school, including SNA resources, and assess whether there are sufficient resources available to the school. NCSE will consider the following as part of this review:

- Overall level of primary care needs within the school and current SNA resources allocated to the school;
- Reasons why school management report that the current allocation is insufficient to meet the primary care needs for students;
- How school management plan to support student with primary care needs, redeploying resources to ensure that students with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of supports. This will include a review of steps taken by the school to review SNA requirements for each student's current primary care needs and deploy existing resources in the most effective manner;
- How the school has maximised the potential for school environment adaptations and/or the use of assistive technology and/or upskilling staff and/or alternative strategies to augment existing supports;
- Where required, the NCSE will visit the school to assess the above;
- SENOS may request supporting documentation from a school such as Personal Pupil Plans (PPPs), Student Support Files, and other relevant documentation in relation to the primary care needs of students. **In line with GDPR, schools are requested not to submit any documentation until requested to do so by a SENO.**

Outcome of Exceptional Reviews

The outcome of the exceptional reviews will supersede the previous allocation. Schools will be advised of the outcome of reviews by e-mail. Outcomes may be as follows:

1. No change in the level of care need identified (and no change in the resultant SNA allocation);

2. Increase in the level of care need identified (which if significant would see an increase in the SNA allocations to the schools) ;

3. Decrease in level of care need identified in the school (which if significant would result in a reduction in SNA allocations as the care need could be managed with less resources than are currently allocated);

In relation to outcome 3, the SNA allocation will be adjusted at the end of the relevant school term.

Post September Review

NCSE will require confirmation of attendance in September 2022 of any students identified by schools as having primary care needs, as part of an exceptional review process, for which additional SNA resources were allocated to the school. Where such new entrants are found not to have enrolled, a review of the school's overall SNA allocation will be undertaken and additional SNA resources granted as part of the exceptional review may be removed. No confirmation of newly enrolled students identified as having primary care needs will be required from schools who did not apply for an exceptional review.

Appeal of the outcome of the Exceptional Review

Where a school is dissatisfied with how their exceptional review has been processed or is dissatisfied with the outcome of their exceptional review they can appeal. Applications for Appeal may be submitted through the NCSE Schools Portal: https://ncse.ie/school-support. Guidelines for Appeal will be published here: https://ncse.ie/for-schools.

Allocation of SNA Posts

SNA posts will be allocated as a result of an exceptional review as follows - 0.5 posts, fulltime posts or an infant post increased to a full post. Infant posts will continue to be the only post allocated to infant schools.

Other Allocation Arrangements

Where schools consider their SNA allocation is in excess of that required to support the care needs of students, the school should contact their local SENO.

The NCSE will develop over the summer period criteria for a rolling programme of targeted reviews of SNA mainstream allocations which would be strategic in nature and would help ensure that the SNAs are allocated to schools with students who have the greatest level of significant care needs. The pilot of the targeted review process will commence in the 2022/23 school year. Full details of the process will be issued to all schools prior to the start of the 2022/23 school year by the NCSE.

Guidance on Completion of Application Form for Exceptional Review

Section 1

Please confirm the total number of students with significant primary care needs requiring support from an SNA in 2022/23.

Section 2

Please provide details as to how the school develops personal pupil plans/ care plans. Please outline how often these plans are reviewed.

Section 3

Please outline how parents are included in the development of their child's personal pupil plan/ care plan.

Section 4

Please summarise how SNA support has been reprioritised and deployed within the school in order to meet the significant primary care needs of students with the greatest level of care needs with specific reference to:

- How the deployment of SNA resources for students with diminishing care needs has changed from 2021/22 to 2022/23;
- How other supports such as, for example, environmental supports, or assistive technology, has been put in place to support primary care needs.

Section 5

Please provide details on what procedures are in place to assist in promoting greater levels of independence amount students.

Section 6

Please provide details of the exceptional circumstance which has arisen for the school. Please explicitly explain how this has impacted on the school's ability to address the primary care needs of the students. Schools should note that an exceptional circumstance is that which is beyond the usual cycle of enrolment numbers year on year. Such circumstances should be unexpected and outside of the school's ability to cater for primary care needs within existing resources.

Section 7

Please provide details of the significant primary care needs that cannot be met from within the school's existing SNA allocation as a direct result of the exceptional circumstance having arisen. This section should focus on where school management perceive a deficit in SNA supports has arisen within the school for the 2022/23 school year.

Section 8

Please provide details for each SNA of duties assigned. This should include the primary and secondary care tasks, and any other duties being carried out by each SNA in the school, including the frequency of, and time required to fulfil each task.