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## Investing in Growth: How Funding Can Enhance Provision for Young Learners with SEND

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## Investing in growth: How funding can enhance provision for young learners with send

**(FE) Peer Reviews**

### Introduction

This case study highlights the role of the peer review and the impact that these have on colleges. The focus of this case study is High Needs (HN) Funding. Funding is a topic that many providers ask for more guidance on and whilst we don't cover this in the other strands, the Peer Review process brings this issue to the forefront. This review shows how HN funding and its investment can have a positive impact on the college and its provision for young learners with SEND.

ETF's Centre for Excellence, Oldham College undertook a comprehensive peer review of another provider – York College. The peer review is a fully subsidised, confidential and non-judgemental review for colleges. The peer review is a supportive tool to determine areas of strength in supporting young learners with SEND and suggested areas for improvement, with a summary, recommendations and support in the follow-up provided after the peer review.

The impact of the peer review can be immediate with some quick solutions embedded such as team name changes to signify change as well as longer term such as the development of strategies in relation to funding, staffing and resources that will benefit learners in the long term.

York College is a FE college in Yorkshire. York College offers a choice of over 70 vocational courses including T levels, 40 A level subjects and 30 apprenticeships. York is not an area of deprivation; however, the college does have a large number of SEN students that travel from other boroughs.

The college has already made some strides with increasing the number of element 2 places by 40, however their average element 3 payment for HN students is low at £2900. This has impacted on their ability to invest in the SEN department and ensure for example adequate staffing structures are in place.

The aims of the review were to support the college with navigating their way around the FE Funding landscape, drive increases in both element 2 and element 3s which will then support the college to drive further investment into staffing and other resources such as Assistive Technology.

### Implementation

Oldham College organised a series of online meetings with York College to understand some of the issues further and then attended York College for a 2-day Peer Review. Following this, the College was able to update on progress by way of a follow up visit when staff from York College attended Oldham College on a site visit to showcase some of the assistive technology and ways of working adopted by Oldham College.

## Implementation (continued)

We spoke to 12 key staff from the college at length and also held a full team meeting with 35 staff from the Learning Support Team. A number of learners also engaged as part of the Peer Review visit.

We met with the person responsible for financial claims and recognised they had not been collaborating with other colleges to compare and contrast their financial claims and their individual costs for example, the cost of access arrangements assessment. This meant the College was vastly underclaiming in terms of HN funding for the following areas: specialist assessment as part of transition, access arrangements assessment, assistive technology assessment, HN progress review, EHCP Annual Reviews. We shared info with the College on our claims.

We demonstrated the journey we had been on with our HN funding, and what the outcome was now. We showed the College how to interpret the regional picture on element 2 allocated places by accessing national data on this. We were then able to support the College with seeing the increases in allocated places given to other providers by the LA. This would support the College with building a bigger picture and strengthen their discussion with the LA.

We showed the college how to interpret funding guidance; York college has a high number of students that are out of borough, yet they had never made a claim for income/export.

The only barrier with this was lack of experience and understanding from the person responsible for making the claims. This was then impacting on other areas of the business; the college was unable to invest in the staffing structure for example.

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## Outcomes

Despite concluding the Peer Review, Oldham College and York College have now built a great professional relationship and we still offer support to York College (recent online meeting took place in January 25)

York College has now increased its average element 3 claim from £2900 to £4000 with a further increase to £6679 for foundation level students. Based on 170 High Needs learners, income has increased from £493,000 to £712,148.

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## Impact and Next Steps

The impact of this means York College have now been able to invest in a new staffing structure to better support the students and staff. Two examples of this are the recruitment of an ALS Manager, and an Assistive Technologist.

The college now has a 3-year plan for improving their allocated places and element 3 funding which will further drive increases in funding. The college is much more confident in leading in these discussions and intends to also make a claim for income/export at the end of the academic year of 24-25. The Local Authority is moving to a banding model for funding, York College now have the confidence to challenge decisions for young people with HN, and ensure they get the funding they need to give them the support they need.

Funding was the key to the challenges faced by this college; they were unable to make changes and invest in resources for students without increasing their funding. Whilst the Peer Review was a great opportunity to provide support, observations are that the college has still needed support and guidance to continue on their journey with this (post peer review).

