

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Leadership Board

SIG Name:	F40
Lead Member:	Cllr Ivan Ould, Leicestershire
Lead Officer:	Doug Allan, Secretary

Aim

To organise an all-party campaign for fairer funding for schools in the worst funded authorities in England.

Key Activities / Outcomes of work undertaken

f40's central aim over more than 20 years has been to influence a significant change in the way the government allocates funding to local authorities and schools. The allocations for primary and secondary pupils in the authorities in the f40 group are among the lowest in the country. Our initial success came when the Coalition government recognised that a new, fairer and more transparent school funding system is needed and we were pleased when this policy was maintained by the subsequent Conservative government.

f40 has welcomed some additional resources allocated to education in recent years. In particular, we welcomed an interim allocation of £390million for 2015-16 shared between authorities identified as being among the poorest funded. Of this amount, £210million was allocated to f40 authorities. However, f40 argued that the allocation of the extra cash was based on the use of inappropriate data and we argued that different calculations could and should have been used. We were pleased when the extra cash was baselined into the schools budget. However, this increase was only a "down payment" against a future new national funding formula. The important thing is that the awarding of this down payment indicated that the case for fair funding for schools had been won: the government agreed that the existing system is unjustifiable and unfair.

The government initially promised a new national funding formula for 2017-18 but this was delayed for a range of reasons, first because of the May 2015 general election and then because of the London Mayoral elections. Further delay occurred when the new Secretary of State for Education announced she needed time to fully understand the issues before moving forward with a new national funding formula.

A first stage consultation on the principles of fair funding was held in the Spring of 2016 and a second stage consultations containing proposals for change was announced in December 2016 and by then the implementation date had been delayed until 2018-19.

f40 welcomed the stage 2 National Funding Formula (NFF) consultation and commended the government for honouring its manifesto commitment to introduce fairer funding for all children in state funded schools in England. We also acknowledge that the proposed funding formula indicated a total gain of £183 million for f40 member authorities once the national formula was fully implemented from 2019-20. But f40 had not anticipated that some poorly funded authorities would not gain and that many schools, both primary and secondary, within poorly funded authorities will lose out.

So f40 informed the government that its proposals fell short of what was expected, that they will not deliver true fairness and, therefore, that they require substantial revision. There are four key elements of the proposals that f40 is unhappy about and has asked the government to consider, namely:

- the proportion of weighting given to additional needs rather than basic entitlement
- the 3% funding floor, which 'locks in' historical differences
- the amount invested in education funding and the cost pressures facing all schools.
- the weakness of evidence used to support the proposals.

f40 has undertaken significant work on updating its own formula proposals which are based on a 'bottom up' construction of the real costs of running a school. This work has been presented to the Department for Education and we hope that it will have favourable consideration.

The government is due to announce the outcomes of its NFF consultation in advance of the parliamentary recess, though the announcement of a snap election in June 2017 may impact on this schedule

Over the last few years MPs representing f40 constituencies have increasingly been supportive and we have worked harder than ever to develop our campaign through links with the LGA, CCN, individual local authorities, schools, governors, schools forums and education professional organisations including the NAHT, ASCL and NGA.

We have maintained our media relations at both national and regional levels. There has been extensive coverage of our activities on television and in the press.