

## **Exceptional Review Process for SNA Allocations in Mainstream Classes in Primary and Post Primary Schools for 2021/22**

**12 May 2021**

**Ref No: NCSE 03/2021**

### **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 2021/22 as set out in the Department of Education Circular 0029/2021.

### **Exceptional Review of Mainstream SNA Allocation 2021/22**

#### **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 2021/22 school year from the date of Department of Education Circular 0029/2021. 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:

- 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;
- Met with the school 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.

### **Application Procedure 2021**

School management bodies requested the NCSE to review last year's exceptional review process to see if it could be simplified to reduce the administrative workload on schools. The NCSE noted that some schools submitted very lengthy documentation last year which was not required at application stage.

This year, the NCSE has moved to an online application process using the existing NCSE Schools Portal <https://ncse.ie/school-support> with which schools are familiar. It is the portal currently used by schools to apply for a range of NCSE supports including in-school support for whole staff, group and individual teachers, funding for teachers to attend approved teacher professional development courses, and is now extended to applications for review of SNA allocations based on exceptional circumstances.

As not all schools have activated their NCSE school support portal account, the NCSE will email a new activation link to those schools who have not already activated their NCSE account by **14 May 2021**. That e-mail will also include guidance on how to raise a new support ticket, that being the mechanism for submitting applications to the NCSE.

### **Processing of Applications**

Priority consideration will be given to applications for the 2021/22 school year. In particular, applications from schools with no SNAs and developing schools will be prioritised and determinations made before 30 June 2021. Other applications will be processed in order of date received.

NCSE will review the overall primary care needs of students enrolled for 2021/22 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:

- Adjustment to existing allocation to the school based on identified deficit of SNA resources;
- Or**
- The school has not demonstrated the need for additional SNA resources at this time.

### **Post September Review**

NCSE will require confirmation of attendance in September 2021 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.

## **Guidance on Completion of Application Form for Exceptional Review**

### **Section 1**

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 2**

Please summarise how SNA support has been redeployed 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 2020/21 to 2021/22;
- How other supports such as, for example, environmental supports, or assistive technology, has been put in place to support primary care needs.

### **Section 3**

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 2021/22 school year.

### **Section 4**

Please confirm the **total number** of students with significant primary care needs requiring support from an SNA in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

### **Section 5**

Please detail timetables for each existing SNA. The timetable 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. The timetable should also include details of the number of students and their relevant class groups for each student supported.