

## **31. Provision of Services by the Authority**

### **Preamble**

Provision exists in delegated schools' budgets to purchase services or advice from third parties which the school does not have sufficient expertise, or does not wish, to provide directly itself. Examples of such services include advice on the curriculum, legal, financial and personnel matters, insurance cover, catering and cleaning and training. Where such services are provided by the local authority<sup>1</sup>, three major arrangements operate.

### **Education Support Services and Business Services to Schools**

Schools are presented with a prospectus of services, early in the calendar year preceding the start of the applicable financial year. Schools then elect which services and, where appropriate, the level of service they require for that following financial year. The charge for services is taken from the school's centrally maintained accounts during September. All services are provided on either financial academic year basis depending on applicability. The school is charged through the accounting system's Internal Recharge mechanism.

### **Service Level Agreements (SLA)**

Certain services cannot be provided through either the Education Support Services and Business Services to Schools due to the relatively complex nature of the individual service specification required. In such circumstances, a SLA is entered into and signed by both parties. The school side of the agreement should be signed by the person so authorised in the school's scheme of delegation. The school is charged through the accounting system's Internal Recharge mechanism.

### **Training**

Such services are provided on an ad hoc basis and the school is charged through the accounting system's Internal Recharge mechanism after attendance (or according to the agreement).

### **Regulations**

- 31.1. Where appropriate A18 of the Manual of Guidance applies equally to the payment of internal invoices to the local authority as to external suppliers.

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<sup>1</sup> Authority to be taken to include all services provided by Oxfordshire County Council, where appropriate.

**See also:**

Scheme for Financing Schools – Section 8. The Provision of Services and Facilities by the Authority

- 31.2. It is possible, on occasion, that the service provided will not be to the satisfaction of the school. In such circumstances, the school should follow the disputes provision of the SLA. In the event that the SLA is not signed by both parties, but the local authority is providing the service and the school is in receipt of that service, the SLA is technically effective and the school will be charged accordingly.
- 31.3. In extreme cases, agreement between the school and the provider will not be reached following reference to the disputes procedure in the SLA, or indeed such a procedure is absent from the SLA. After a period of 60 days from the commencement of the dispute a representative of the school and of the local authority will be invited to meet with the FBP CEF. This meeting will be an open discussion with the objective of a solution to the dispute being negotiated. It may be that a compromise is not reached at the meeting itself but that a suitable dialogue to facilitate such compromise is at least commenced.

If after a further period of 30 days the dispute is not settled a formal arbitration hearing shall be convened. The hearing will be chaired by a Strategic Lead from Childrens Services Directorate and the role of arbiter will be undertaken by a member of the Directorate Leadership Team of the Childrens Services. A38 details the process. The decision of the arbiter will be final. Any sums of money outstanding should be settled immediately. In the absence of this, the school budget share will be charged.

**See also:**

Scheme for Financing Schools – Section 6.3 (point 5).