Guidance to using the "SEN decision making grids"- broad trial stage

Introduction
Last year 139 ERSA applications were turned down. This represents a waste of time and money across many departments and services. The "SEN monitoring project" was set up to try and stop this. As part of this project funding has been clarified, schools with rejected ERSA's have been visited and given support and lastly, documentation to support schools with decision making about applications for a statement is being drafted in order to ensure a long term improvement in this area.

The documents presented here were initially trialled against cases brought to panel and is now being published so that a wider trial can take place.

It is important to find out from a wider selection of cases:
- that the descriptors used in the documents accurately reflect the type of decisions made by panel.
- that the guidance prevents the high level of rejected ERSA's.
- that the guidance provides greater clarity to all services for expectations of provision compared to level of need.

The matrices
These grids have been designed using information already published by Ealing; draft documents from Ealing and published documents from other authorities - principally, Surrey, Camden, Kent, Barking and Dagenham, although other LA's documentation was also consulted. They have been compiled to aid decision making on provision needed for SEN children who are already in mainstream school. The grids have banded information in different categories that include quantitative analysis, descriptive analysis, expectations for provision already in place and expressions of future need.

Professionals can use the grid to highlight different levels of need and try to find a "best fit" for the type and level of Special Educational Need. If used alongside the "Guidance for Supportive Interventions" then they should also give schools ideas for supporting these pupils effectively in school.

The initial trials have shown that the bandings should **never** be used as individual "criteria" for a statement but give rough guidance as to the type of provision needed. Different children have different needs and may need more than one grid to be assessed to find the "best fit" level of support and provision.

Method of use
It is suggested that the grids are used as a tool for discussion when trying to decide on the best course of action for a child.
- Highlight the key strengths and weaknesses,
- Discuss the provision that has already worked - or not -
- Work together to decide on supportive interventions and provision needed to ensure access to the curriculum and progress.