

MP's fury as cash grants go south



FUNDING FURY: MP Neil Turner wants fairer redistribution of wealth

By [Chris Wilkinson](#)

A huge amount of funding earmarked for services in Wigan is instead being given to some of London's wealthiest boroughs, it has been revealed.

A total of £686m intended for some of the country's most deprived areas, including £10.1m that should be going to Wigan, is instead going to some of the capital's best off areas, the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities outside London (SIGOMA) has revealed.

The funding is not being given to Wigan despite the changes that were made to the government system for distributing funding for social services in 2005.

While reviewing the system, the government recognised the areas where there was a need to update and strengthen the way in which social services funding is calculated, but chose to employ a system whereby the funding would only gradually be taken from the authorities receiving too much.

The intention was to prevent these authorities being hit by a sudden, large reduction in funding, and is a process known as "formula dampening".

Neil Turner, MP for Wigan, has now joined campaigners from SIGOMA to call for ministers to redistribute the funding as they promised two years ago, ahead of the forthcoming comprehensive spending review.

Mr. Turner said: "How can it be right for Wigan, with its social and deprivation problems, to be subsidising an affluent London borough like Kensington and Chelsea to the tune of £10.1m?"

"The forthcoming comprehensive spending review means the amount will be set over three years, not one, so it is very important that we get the figures right.

"We do not want anybody to be chopped out of twenty or thirty million pounds, but there has to be a strong movement towards each local authority getting what they are entitled to."

Mr Turner also chaired the recent meeting of local authority leaders and MPs representing authorities belonging to SIGOMA, during which he called for action from the government to help resolve the issue of funding to the most vulnerable communities, where the government's own evidence shows that money should be prioritised.

Strong representations were made to Andy Burnham, MP for Leigh and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who said that the government would listen fully to the arguments and evidence supplied by SIGOMA when making its decision.