

## Summary: Financial / Children and Young People (CYP) narrative

### Financial plan narrative

This is a brief description for managing the pressures on the DSG:

The challenges facing the high needs block stem from unfunded responsibilities within the Children and Families Act 2014, particularly for young people aged 19-25 and the requirement to transfer all statements to EHCPs which heightened expectation, driving an increase in EHCPs rather than giving families confidence that their child's needs can be met through ordinarily available provision. While we have had some success in managing growth in EHCPs, remaining below the national average, cost pressures have outstripped the available budget resulting in a deficit position as we enter 2022/23.

To manage the financial pressure, we have established a high needs funding review group (RG) in partnership with schools and nurseries, accountable to the Schools' Forum to scrutinise all areas of expenditure within the high needs block. On behalf of the Schools Forum, the RG is overseeing the action which is being taken to tackle the deficit, addressing demand and cost, ensuring affordability and value for money. The RG has overseen the implementation of a banding tool for top up funding. It closely monitored the financial trajectory, comprehensively reviewing the first full year's data and overseeing recalibration to ensure it is affordable. Through the Schools' Forum we have engaged headteachers in moderation of the banding tool. We continue to focus on reviewing existing EHCPs in order to reduce provision offered and top-up costs as children achieve the outcomes set out in their EHCPs, ceasing EHCPs if needs change and it is no longer necessary for provision.

We have established a work stream to involve schools in disseminating effective practice in ordinarily available in schools to reduce the need for an EHCP, increasing transparency around the use of notional SEN funding. We have developed benchmark data to allow comparison of practice at SEN Support. Our other priorities include promoting early years Inclusion funding (SENIF) for those without EHCPs and targeting commissioned outreach to support greater mainstream inclusion, develop schools' capacity to support pupils with SEN, particularly those with autism. We are taking action to reduce our use of the independent and non-maintained specialist sector because of cost. We have created additional specialist capacity in local schools; new specialist provision for nursery aged children school; expansion of our special school into satellite provision; new specialist resource bases in mainstream schools and academies.

In order to offset forecast costs for young people over 18, work is underway to drive down demand and control expenditure in a number of areas working in partnership with local FE providers and adult social care. We have put in place a post 16 task and finish group to explore cost pressures. We want to see 5% efficiency savings in the current costs of local FE year on year and drive down the average fees paid for independent sector provision because lower cost local alternatives have become available. We are developing pathways to adult services for those who may otherwise be in residential provision. We have been successful in creating high quality internship opportunities that lead to employment for those over 18.

### High needs trends

Our strategy for managing the number of CYP receiving individual funding from the high needs block:

In September 2021 we launched our SEND Strategy for 2021-2024 setting out our services to preparing children and young people for their adult lives. Decisions about how the high needs block is spent are the financial expression of the policy. In July 2022, our SEN Strategic Partnership Board reviewed our progress in delivering the Strategy.

We are increasing the capacity of all settings and schools to meet the needs of children and young people identified as SEN Support so that EHC assessment requests are only submitted when the legal test for assessing them can be clearly met. We can do this through a co-ordinated approach to the services which provide them with advice, support and workforce development e.g., networks, training and outreach. Our Educational Psychology Service has a key role to place alongside School Improvement. We are supporting schools to understand how to make the best use of existing resources. We know that continued growth in the number of EHCPs will increase pressure on the high needs block.

We have ensured that there is good awareness of the range of advice and training to enable them to meet the needs of most pupils with SEN without the need for an EHCP. Through our SENCO networks we have highlighted what is available through the local offer and how schools can maximise this to augment what is ordinarily available. We have begun to undertake benchmarking of schools' SEN registers to raise awareness of those with high and low levels of pupils with SEN, with EHCPs and making referrals for assessment, drawing out the difference between large and smaller schools and continue to share best practice between schools. This data is now shared with headteachers.

We are working with commissioned services from the NHS and schools that host specialist provision alongside our outreach teams to increase the local offer.

New EHC Plans are allocated a funding band and as annual reviews take place, we are reviewing the allocate funding via the banding, targeting greatest need, addressing historic allocations, looking at aspects of provision no longer required or that can be accessed without an EHCP. Where we can lawfully do so, we will cease to maintain EHCPs.

We recognise that annual review is the only mechanism for parents to request an increase in therapy to "catch up" and we understand that nationally and locally "catch up" is being used to address gaps related to Covid. This is unhelpful to us in our work in SEN as it will create a pressure for enhanced levels of provision which may be unnecessary or inappropriate for young people working below age expectations.

Since opening our new nursery provisions for autistic children in 2021/2022 we have supported over 20 pupils who would previously have been placed in the independent and non-maintained sector.

### Outcomes

How our management plan will ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the local area:

Securing school places for children and young people with SEND, particularly those with are subject to an EHCP requires strong co-production with all partners as well as an understanding of the existing needs of local children and young people with SEN. It calls for analysis of local schools and local need as well as an understanding of likely future trends.

We recognise that children and young people with SEND need the best start in life and the best education. The quality of provision in Westminster schools is very high; attainment and Ofsted outcomes evidence the progress children and young people make. This management plan builds on good school, good teaching and good SEN practice.

The quality of local provision is as crucial to parents as the welcome that they receive when they ask to visit. Parents want to get a strong sense that all local schools are inclusive and have capacity to support children with the broadest range of special educational needs. They want a good school for their children. Parents will sometimes report that a particular school or early year setting signposted them towards a special school, or implied provision is only available in the independent sector. Given that we have an above average number of children and young people with EHCPs in mainstream, many pupils' actual experiences tell a different story.

Parents of children with autism have told us they want to see more places in resource bases, including support for those who are high functioning and those who may exhibit challenging behaviour when they are anxious. Parents and carers of older young people have asked for a broader range of courses in post 16 settings and more opportunities for work experience, particularly in retail. They welcome the increase in supported internships. We have established a workstream of our SEND Strategy to lead on preparation for adulthood.