

Bristol Schools Forum

Agenda Tuesday, 26th September, 2023 at 5.00 pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

	Start	Item	Action	Owner	Paper
1.	17:00	Welcome Chair to Welcome & to lead introductions Chair's Business:- 1. Acknowledgement of virtual audience 2. Chair's remarks	A	Chair	
2.	17:05	Forum Standing Business (a) Apologies for Absence (b) Confirmation meeting is quorate (c) Nomination of the Chair & Vice Chair (d) Appointment of new members/Resignations: (e) Notification of Vacancies: (f) Declarations of Interest	A	Clerk	
3.	17:10	Minutes of the Previous Meeting (a) To confirm as a correct record (b) Matters arising not covered on agenda	A	Chair	3 - 7
4.	17:15	DSG Budget Monitor - Angel Lai	I		8 - 13
5.	17:30	National Funding Formula and DSG Funding Update - Angel Lai a) Finance Sub-group: Nominations of Representatives. The proposed date for the sub- group to meet is the 31 st October 2023	Di		14 - 21
6.	17:45	DSG Management Plan - Angel Lai	I		22 - 29
7.	18:00	High Needs Recovery Plan Update - Delivering Better Value - Reena Bhogal-Welsh	I		30 - 34
8.	18:20	AOB Chair's Final Remarks and Close	I		

(*) A = Admin, I = Information, De = Decision required, C = Consultation, Di = Discussion

Clerk: Claudette Campbell email: claudette.campbell@bristol.gov.uk Tel: City Hall**Chair:** (contact via clerk)

FUTURE MEETINGS

Date
28 November 23
16or17 January 2024
26 March 2024
21 May 2024
16 May 2024

Bristol Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 12th July, 2023
at 5.00 pm at Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present:

Mandy Cheshire	St Bede’s Catholic Colleges
Simon Eakins	Cathedral Primary
Tonya Hill	New Fosseyway School
Simon Holmes	St Philips Marsh Nursery
Tracey Jones	Merchants Academy
Jo Kingston	Diocese of Clifton
Sarah Lovell (Chair)	Bristol Brunel Academy
Samantha Packer	PVI Early Years
Chris Pring	Whitehall Primary School
Cedric Sanguinol	Bishop Road Primary
Aderyn Zajicova	The Limes Nursery School

In attendance from Bristol City Council

Reena Bhogal-Welsh	Director of Education and Skills
Angel Lai	Finance Manager (Children and Education)
Claudette Campbell	Clerk to the Schools Forum

	Action
1. Welcome	
The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting.	
Thanked the vice chair for leading the previous meeting.	
2. Forum Standing Business	
<p>a. Apologies for Absence were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cameron Shaw • Melanie Bunce • Stephanie Williams • Kate Matheson • Steve Hornsby • Jo Willis • Marian Curran • Cllr Asher Craig • Denise Murray <p>b. Quorate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate <p>c. Resignation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that that in addition to those who had tendered their resignation the following was received from • Tracey Jones – Primary Academy Head <p>d. Appointments of New Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None to report <p>e. Notifications of Vacancies that have been advertised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Academy Secondary Governor 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 maintained primary Head • 1 maintained primary Governor • 1 Academy primary Governor • 1 special Academy Head <p>f. Declaration of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no declarations of interest 	
3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting	
<p>The minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd May was resolved as a correct record.</p>	
4. Update from Director of Education and Skills - Verbal Update	
<p>Reena Bhogal-Welsh (RBW) spoke to her presentation providing an update on the Family Hubs and SEND Review. The following was highlighted from her presentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The launch events for the Family Hubs had taken place. The events included the community and the families that would be served by the venturer. • The review of the EHCP processes has commenced and the intention is to report back to the forum in the Autumn term. <p>There were no comments from forum members.</p> <p>The Forum resolved to note the report.</p>	
5. DSG Budget Monitor Period 2	
<p>Angel Lai (Finance Manager, Children and education) presented the report on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).</p> <p>The report provided information on the 2023/24 DSG position as of Period 02 to end of May 2023.</p> <p>The forum's attention was drawn to the following in the report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. That with the 32% increase to funding rates to 2-year-olds, the early years overspend will improve. b. Asked to note that the budget position on LA maintained school is summarised in Table 2 in the report and not included within the Schools' Block balance figure in Table 1. c. LA maintained schools have a projected £1.5m deficit; those schools have been contacted and meetings will take place with the leadership teams to explore affordable solutions. In addition to delivering training for Governors on financial matters. <p>In answer to the questions the following was noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> d. Early years funding to support the 9-month-old & new children provision; the information available on the government website advises of the following uplifts - 1) 2yr increase from £6 to 7.95 per hr 2) 3-4yrs 33pence up lift 3) supplementary funding up by 24pence. To be applied from September 2023. e. The Forum was looking for the funding formula for the new offer to parents, but no details were available. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. All were reminded that 'Capital' funding to support additional places can be applied for and there were no known restrictions on individual settings doing so. g. It was suggested that the use of 'sponsor licence' could be employed to tackle the issue of lack of staffing. A sponsor licence grants permission to a UK employer to sponsor non-UK resident skilled workers. h. Action: RBW to do due diligence on this process as to whether this step can be taken by maintained settings and report back. i. AL explain that work was underway to consider the delivery of services in the current financial climate and to establish a strategic plan to sustain financial stability; the plan incorporates & is informed by current and arising issues and includes horizon planning. Learning support seminars are in place to upskill colleagues and provide additional business acumen training. AL confirmed that direct support is available to school settings to address specific issues. j. All acknowledged the difficult balancing act currently in place, that requires all settings to both reduce budgets and expand capacity to take on new service provision & users. k. The forum was assured that the points raised had been noted and that the plans being produced aims to produce creative solutions that would support ongoing need. The outcome of the work around early years will shortly be at a place to share with the forum. l. The Chair thanked the Finance Officer for the report. m. The Forum resolved to Note the report 	RBW(1)
<p>6. Delivering Better Value in SEND Resourcing</p>	
<p>The Director of Education and Skills, presented the report reminding the forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. That the programme had two workstreams b. Workstream One (1) & Two (2) governance is in place for both. The DSG Programme is part of the wider 'our families' programme governance, in the LA concerned with transformation in children's and education; those that sit in governance of the programme are drawn from professional colleagues across children's service bringing with them intelligence that will provide robust governance. c. The service has engaged an experienced external consultant as the Strategic Programme Manager. They bring with them understanding and knowledge of the national position on SEND. The Forum was reminded that the DSG is programme is part of a wider 'Our Families' programme, with 14 mitigation programmes. The appointment ensures oversight of the programmes being undertaken to deliver better value in SEND. d. Attention was drawn to section 4.5 in the report that details the planning workshop for Workstream One; to the note the timelines; to note the intention to enable collaborative working on SEND delivering. e. Workstream Two; contract procurement process is ongoing; the next step is to identify the independent delivery partner. As part of the process contenders must deliver an option report for consideration and review. This process is on track to present the final contractor details to Cabinet in December 2023. <p>The following was noted from the discussion that followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. The forum questioned how the programme would handle the loss of experienced workforce in the sector and arising vacancies. The result of which has led to a shrinking workforce and one without the right skills. 	

<p>g. Assurances were given that an aspect of the workforce action plan will consider the question of 'where is the workforce', the impact of prevailing issues such as Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis. Those involved in this project are drawn from education and health sectors because it is accepted that the solution can be applied universally to address all areas of service provision.</p> <p>h. The hope is that a Bristol Solution is devised to encourage recruitment to all sectors that are currently struggling with vacancies.</p> <p>i. Information was sought on the details around the school selection process for participants for Workstream One.</p> <p>j. Action RBW; confirmed the process being devised would be fair and that details will be provided in a format, for the next meeting, that avoids prejudice to the process.</p> <p>k. Workstream Two: Many settings are involved in funding consultation during the Autumn term and there was real concern that this may impact how they engage in the programme.</p> <p>l. Action RBW thanked the forum for sharing, agreeing that this was vital intelligence to share with colleagues. The ask of colleagues would be to factor this in to avoid consultation fatigue; to avoid adding additional pressure to settings but still ensure engagement to enable the project milestones are met.</p> <p>m. The Forum resolved to note the report.</p>	<p>RBW (2)</p> <p>RBW (3)</p>
<p>7. Early Years SEND</p>	
<p>The Director of Education & Skills presented a report, to inform and review by the forum on the progress of the Early Years SEND Panel</p> <p>The following was highlighted.</p> <p>a. In 2017 LA's were directed to establish Special Education Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) to support children with emerging special educational needs in their early year's settings. The details of the operation of the fund are set out in the report.</p> <p>b. The report details the outcome from the Early Years SEND Project Plan and how the fund, allocated by the Forum, of £250,000 was used.</p> <p>c. The report details the pressures and the project spend together with the next steps.</p> <p>The following questions were arose following the presentation:</p> <p>d. Forum members agreed that it was helpful to see in the report the table displaying the increase in numbers of those children requiring support during the period 2018 to 2023. Noteworthy are the numbers of children remaining in nursery settings until their needs can be met by the primary setting.</p> <p>e. All agreed the importance of resolving issues in the early years that would then carry that child through all aspects of their education to the enable them to become a member of the adult workforce.</p> <p>f. There was an ask for clear communication on the issue of children remaining in nursery setting to counter any negative assertions on primary schools. To clarify that in many cases these settings want to meet the needs of all children but do require time to formulate a way to do so before inviting the child into that setting.</p> <p>g. Acknowledged the positive summary in the report on childhood trauma often confused with SEND and the need to overcome this by putting in place the right support to identify the actual need.</p> <p>h. The Family Hubs service provision is seen as vital in supporting families to identify and distinguish, the nature, of the additional support needed. This would ensure tailored support at</p>	

<p>the right phase. When support is provided at the earliest possible time going forward the overall need decreases and will positively impact this funding stream.</p> <p>i. RBW assured the forum that all reviews will consider the issue of sustainability and future proofing this provision.</p>	
<p>8. Any other Business</p>	
<p>The Chair thanked forum members for their attendance and Bristol City Council Officers for their reports and support that enables the forum to meet.</p>	

The meeting closed at 6.10 pm.

Bristol Schools Forum
2023/24 DSG forecast report as at August 2023 (Period 05 / P05)

Date of meeting:	26 th September 2023
Time of meeting:	5.00 pm
Venue:	Virtual meeting

1 Purpose of report

1.1 This report provides information of the 2023/24 DSG position as at Period 05 (P05) to end of July 2023.

2 Recommendation

2.1 Schools Forum is invited to:

- a) note the P05 forecast position as at end of August 2023 for DSG.
- b) approve redesignation of funding (listed in Table 3) to facilitate temporary support for LA Maintained Schools in financial difficulty.

3 2023/24 DSG forecast position

The DSG ended the 2022/23 financial year with an in-year deficit of £15.031m or a cumulative deficit of £39.681m including £24.650m deficit brought forward from the previous years.

As illustrated in Table 1 (with further details set out in Appendix 1), 2023-24 gross allocation for DSG is £452.3m (or net amount £196.7m after deduction for academies recoupment, NNDR and direct funding of high needs places by ESFA) per ESFA announcement on 20th July 2023.

The DSG is forecasting to overspend by £18.5m in 2023/24, which is broadly in line with £18.7m in-year forecast deficit position reported in July 2023. The main driver of forecast overspend remains to be in High Needs top up and placements costs resulted from increasing EHCP and complexity of Children with SEN. This means the unmitigated deficit forecast position at the end of 2023/24 could reach £58.170m.

Bristol Education Service has been on the Transformation journey to improve its service provision and SEN infrastructure with the support from the sector and DfE, mitigation proposals were identified alongside DfE DBV programme. Workstream 1 programme is well under way, £3.180m mitigations was planned to materialise in 2023-24 if proposals are supported and delivered in the planned timescale. However, £1m mitigations are currently highlighted as at risk due to further due diligence work is still required and delay in securing a delivery partner to delivery workstream 2 mitigation proposals. This means the mitigated in-year deficit

position for 2023-24 could be reduced to £16.376m if proposed mitigations materialise. It is vital that benefits of mitigation proposals are monitored and delivered on timely basis in order to restore and secure financial health of DSG funding in the longer term.

Early Years is forecasting an in-year overspend of £0.296m, this is driven by £0.650m forecast overspend in EY's SEN while EY & Nursery Improvement planned overspend of £0.266m will be covered by unspent EY transformation funding from 2022-23.

High Needs Transformation programme is forecasting an in-year overspend of £1.049m which will be covered by carry-forward funding from previous years' underspend of £0.980m.

Table 1 - Bristol Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24	2022/23 b/f balance	Gross DSG funding / Budget 2023/24*	P05 Gross DSG forecast outturn	In-year variance as at P05	Cummulative c/f forecast position as at P05
	£'000				
Schools Block	(787)	323,851	323,851	(0)	(787)
De-delegation	(527)	0	(1)	(1)	(528)
Central School services Block	8	2,717	2,709	(8)	(0)
Early Years	(605)	37,432	38,333	902	296
High Needs Block	42,520	86,675	103,221	16,546	59,067
High Needs Transformation	(928)	1,627	2,677	1,049	121
Funding	0	(452,302)	(452,302)	0	0
Total (Unmitigated position)	39,680	(0)	18,488	18,488	58,170
Mitigations (budget v.s. forecast in 2023-24)		(3,180)	(2,112)	(1,068)	(2,112)
Total - Mitigated position	39,680		16,376	(1,068)	56,058

* Bristol gross DSG Allocations, including recoupment and deductions for NNDR, and for direct funding of high needs places directly passported to schools by ESFA totalling £255.752m as at 20th July 2023.

3.1 Schools Block (Nil variance). All of the formula funding for maintained mainstream schools and academies has been allocated. Scope for variation is in the growth fund, which is currently expected to be fully spent.

3.1.1 LA Maintained Schools forecast position

2022/23 was proven to be challenging for the sector and the financial health of LA maintained schools deteriorated by £5.279m during the year and ended the financial year with £1.765m cumulative deficit.

2023/24 LA maintained schools' forecast financial position as at July 2023 is summarised in Table 2 below which is NOT included within Schools' Block balance figure in Table 1 above.

Table 2 - 2023/24 Bristol LA Maintained Schools Financial Summary	2023/24 Closing Balance Forecast as at Q1	2023/24 in-year Forecast as at Q1 (end of July 2023)	Number of Schools with cumulative deficit as at 31/3/2024	Number of Schools Variance to 31/3/2023
Nursery	6,818,076	-232,007	11 of 12	no change
Primary	-2,194,491	711,886	5 of 28	up one
Primary with Nursery Class	-474,500	262,675	2 of 12	no change
Secondary	-355,348	36,317	0 of 2	no change
Special	-632,009	157,386	1 of 5	no change
PRU	-239,910	264,035	0 of 1	no change
Total	2,921,818	1,200,292	19 of 60	
Children Centres (CC)	654,371	113,039	1 of 1	no change
Sum total including CC	3,576,189	1,313,331	20 of 61	
HUBS (Moved to FinF)	0			not in TWS return
Total	3,576,189	1,313,331		

Based on information provided by LA Maintained Schools on 31st July 2023, an overall deficit position of £1.3m (including Children's Centre) was projected by Bristol LA Maintained Schools, made up of 8 schools forecasting in-year deficit of £2.493m (or an average of £75k deficit per school), offset by 28 schools forecasting £1.188m surplus (or £42k per school).

While Maintained Nursery Schools in-year forecast position improved by £0.232m due to additional £1.6m funding uplift in MNS supplement in 2023/24 and enhanced rates commencing September 2023, recovery plans will still be required to address the accumulated historic deficits of £6.818m.

Primary and Secondary schools also experience financial challenges, July 2023 forecast indicating an overspend position of £1.5m in 2023/24 despite additional £10.749m MSAG (Bristol indicative allocation of Mainstream Schools' Additional Grant, or £10.724m per latest update in July).

Education and Financial Service are working closely with the Sector to explore options to bring Schools Finance back to sustainable footing. All schools forecasting deficit position have been notified of the need to produce a robust plan to demonstrate and secure their long-term financial sustainability. Meetings was held with schools' leadership team and schools' governing body to explore affordable solutions.

Where plans can demonstrate sustainability and ability to recover the historic financial deficit a funding source will need to be identified to temporarily bridge the financial gap in LA maintained schools. It is proposed that the funds outlined in the table below totalling £1.102m will be

earmarked, utilised and recycled for this purpose. Subject to School Forums endorsement the funds will be moved in to an earmarked reserve to provide temporary support for LA Maintained Schools in Financial difficulty.

	Funding source	Description	Available budget (£'000)	Proposed redesignated funding amount (£'000)
1	2022-23 schools block surplus	£270k growth fund underspend and £517k surplus from closed schools	787	517
2	De-delegation surplus	Schools in financial difficulty	335	335
3	TWS reserves		250	250
4	ESFA	additional funding for LA Maintained schools in Financial difficulty, awaiting further details	not known	not known
Total possible funding to facilitate temporary financial support for LA maintained schools in financial difficulty (e.g. Licenced Deficit)			1,372	1,102

The utilisation of this designated fund will be monitored and reported back to Schools Forum. Regular reviews will take place to ensure schools remain focused on improving its financial health to warrant a safe and affordable education service delivery to the CYP's in the city.

- 3.2 **De-delegated resources (Nil variance).** 2023/24 budget is anticipated to be fully spent.
- 3.3 **School Central Services Block (Nil Variance).** 2023/24 budget is anticipated to be underspent by £8k to offset carry forward overspend from previous years.
- 3.4 **Early Years Block (£0.296m overspend).**

Early Years is experiencing pressure in emerging SEN which is anticipated to overspend by £0.650m during the financial year, plus planned overspend of £0.267m which will be funded by EY / MNS improvement fund carried forward from previous year to support EY transformation work in 2023/24.

- 3.5 **High Needs Block (£16.616m overspend).** The High Needs block is anticipated to overspend by £16.6m in 2023/24. This is mainly driven by increase in EHCP and complexity of Children with SEN, overspend was forecasted in top up funding of £5m, special placement (pre- and post-16) £7.4m, ISP £2m and Teachers pay & pension £1.2m.

Education Transformation (£1.049m overspend). £0.980m planned overspend will be covered by underspend from 2022/23 High Needs Transformation fund.

£1.627m (or 0.5%) was transferred from the Schools Block to The High Needs Block to fund High needs recovery work following budget approval by the Schools' Forum in January 2023.

- 3.6 High Needs recovery plan proposals has been developed alongside the DSG Management Plan and Department for Education Delivering Better Value for SEND Programme (DfE DBV programme), latest forecast is estimating that unmitigated DSG cumulative deficit could reach £127.4m in 2027-28; which was broadly in line with Newton's (DfE DBV delivering partner) forecast (of £128.2m by 2027-28). Further updates on DSG Management Plan and DBV programme is covered in Education Director's update.

The Belonging with SEND Programme (was known as Education Transformation Programme), primarily concerned with SEN and consequently the High Needs Block, a separate report was available in January 2023 Schools Forum paper (Agenda Item 8, link: [Jan23 SF DBV update](#)), an update will be available in November 2023. Nationally High Needs continues to be challenging and in Bristol this has been exacerbated by work to clear the backlog of EHCP.

- 3.7 **Funding (Nil Variance).** £452.302m as at July 2023 announcement, which will be subject to Early Year's adjustment where funding is calculated in arears based on actual participation.

In summary DSG is forecasted to overspend by £18.5m in August 2023/24 (P05). This is equivalent to a cumulative forecast carry forward deficit reserve balance of £58.168m including £39.680m deficit balance brought forward from previous years.

SEN topup continue to be the main financial pressure, whilst £8m (or 10.2%) funding uplift was welcomed in 2023/24 High Needs Block funding allocation, this is way below 2022/23 in-year deficit in High Needs block (£15.974m), neither would this contribute to DSG cumulative deficit position recovery. While transformation work is underway and as financial benefits still needs be to validated, this forecast is reflecting an unmitigated deficit position.

As statutory overwrite has been extended by DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) for another three years to March 2026, this gives the LA time to deliver DGS management plan and mitigations with the aim to bring DSG annual spend back to a sustainable footing.

Bristol has secured £1.0m from DfE DBV programme (Delivering Better Value in SEND). Along with £1.6m transformation fund from 2023/24 Schools Block to High Needs approved by the Schools' Forum in January 2023, this gives a total of £2.6m to deliver DBV programmes and High Needs recovery plan, which is in addition to the £0.980m carry forward fund from Belong with SEND programme.

Two workstreams funded through a Department for Education Delivering Better Value (DBV) Grant have started to move from the development to the delivery phase. A tender process for workstream 2 was completed in the summer to secure a delivery partner to review High Needs Block funding which is subject to public consultation. The 2023/24 forecast position could be improved by £2.1m if benefits in mitigation proposals materialise in the year. Further updates on DBV programme and High Needs Recovery plan is included within Education Director's update.

Appendix 1 - 2023/24 DSG P05 forecast position as at August 2023

Bristol DSG Outturn position as at Period 5 (P05) 2023/24	Brought forward 1.4.22	Funding 2023/24	P05 Forecast position	In-year movement	Carry forward 31.3.24	2022/23 Outturn position
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Maintained Schools		80,857	80,857	(0)		77,821
Academy Recoupment		240,206	240,206	0		223,990
Growth Fund		2,788	2,788	0		2,063
Schools Block	(787)	323,851	323,851	(0)	(787)	303,874
De-delegation Services	(527)	0	(1)	(1)	(528)	(23)
Admissions	6	575	575	0	6	529
Centrally Retained	1	2,142	2,134	(8)	(7)	2,213
Schools Central Services	8	2,717	2,709	(8)	(0)	2,742
National Formula		29,523	29,507	(16)		27,105
2 Year Old Funding		2,914	2,914	0		3,172
Pupil Premium (EYPP)		386	386	0		317
Additional Support Services		500	500	0		457
SEN Top up		1,686	2,335	650		2,074
Staffing		2,272	2,274	2		1,892
Disability Access Fund		152	152	0		105
EY & Nursery improvement work		0	266	266		74
Early Years Block	(605)	37,432	38,333	902	296	35,196
Commissioned Services		2,653	4,673	2,019		3,422
Core Place Funding		9,289	9,235	(54)		9,102
Staffing		1,237	2,550	1,312		2,272
Top Up		46,390	51,665	5,275		48,610
Placements		10,349	17,609	7,260		14,485
Pupil Support		975	1,708	733		1,402
HOPE Virtual School		236	236	0		235
Academy Recoupment		15,547	15,547	0		15,099
Education Transformation		1,627	2,677	1,049		1,343
High Needs Block	41,592	88,302	105,898	17,596	59,187	95,972
Funding		452,302	470,791			437,761
Total	39,681	0	18,488	18,488	58,170	15,031

Bristol Schools Forum **Update on the Dedicated School Grant 2024-25**

Date of meeting:	26th September 2023
Time of meeting:	5.00 pm
Venue:	Bordeaux Room, City Hall

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report provides an outline of emerging DSG funding levels for 2024/25, and updates on changes to the School Block with the implementation of the hard National Funding Formula. As details on allocations are yet to be confirmed any figures are indicative and should be treated only as such.

2 Recommendation

2.1 Schools Forum is invited to:

- a) **Note the indicative 2024/25 funding levels.**
- b) **Note the transition to a hard NFF will continue in 2024-25 and the proposed restrictions relating to the DSG School Block.**
- c) **Note that the LA will consult with schools on items in the local formula, particularly MFG, transfers between blocks, and formula factors.**
- d) **Note that the LA will consult with schools on their views on de-delegation, and then report the results of the consultation to Forum for their decision at the meeting in November.**
- e) **Agree to the re-establishment of a Finance Sub-group to consider funding formula proposals for 2024-25**

3 Background

- 3.1 The ESFA released some details of the Pre-16 schools revenue funding for 2024/25 on Monday 17th July 2023. [National funding formula for schools and high needs 2024 to 2025](#)
- 3.2 The published information included provisional National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for Schools Block (excluding Growth), High Needs Block and Central School Services Block for 2024/25, based on current pupil data. Actual allocations and the Growth allocations will be determined later in the Autumn, based on Autumn 2023 school census data. There was no information on Early Years funding in this release.

3.3 For mainstream school funding (the School Block), the ESFA has indicated the intention to continue to move towards a 'hard' national funding formula, following the implementation in 2023-2024.

3.4 Changes that are expected to be in place for 2024/25 include:

- The NFF calculations for 2024-25 are based on the most up-to-date school and pupil characteristics data. These are taken from the 2023-24 authority proforma tool (APT) data and the 2023/24 general annual grant (GAG) data.
- Local factor values must move a further 10% closer to NFF factor values, with maximum and minimum values in place for factors, further limiting local priorities
- New approach to allocating split sites funding in the NFF.
- Inclusion of previously separated mainstream schools additional grant into the block funding which will be added to the baseline and will increase the per pupil funding, this will also include the funding for pupils who have been eligible for free school meals at any time in the last six years (FSM6) and the lump sum funding; and increasing the minimum per pupil funding.
- Calculation for the low prior attainment proportions will be based on 2019 data.
- Introduction of a compulsory formularised split sites factor in the NFF which local authorities will be required to mirror in their local formulae. This will replace the previous locally determined split sites factor used by some local authorities.
- DfE introducing a methodology for calculating and allocating funding for falling rolls
- New local formula requirements for growth funding.

3.5 Whilst funding allocated to the schools and high needs blocks is distributed to individual LAs using National Funding Formula (NFF), the LA will retain some limited discretion over the local formula in to distributing the schools block to individual schools.

4 Funding levels for 2024/25

- 4.1 The announcement has stated that funding for Funding through the mainstream schools national funding formula (NFF) is increasing by 2.7% per pupil in 2024-25, compared to 2023-24. Taken together with the funding increases seen in 2023-24, this means that funding through the schools NFF will be 8.5% higher per pupil in 2024-25, compared to 2022-23. This is based on pupil and school characteristics data from the 2023- 24 APT, which is based on the Adjusted October 2022 school census data.
- 4.2 The NFF factor unit values for Basic Entitlement (AWPU) FSM6, IDACI, Low Attainment, EAL and the lump sum are being increased, however forum will be aware Bristol currently funds many of these factors at a higher rate than NFF. A comparison between the current local formula factor values, the 2023-24 NFF factor values and the 2024-25 NFF factor values is provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 The provisional Schools Block allocation for Bristol has been published at £343.97m, before growth funding, with actual allocations expected to be published in December 2023.
- 4.4 The provisional High Needs Block allocation for Bristol has been published at £89.229m (a £5.8m m increase from 2023/24), with actual allocations expected to be published in December 2023.
- 4.5 The central schools services block provides funding for the ongoing responsibilities that local authorities continue to have for all schools. As it has been the practice in recent years, funding for historic commitments within this block will be reduced by a further 20% for 2024/25. The provisional Central School Services Block allocation for Bristol has been published at £2.693m, with actual allocations expected to be published in December 2023. This is an overall reduction of £24k reflecting a £95k reduction in the historical commitments allocation, partially offset by an increase (+£71k) in funding for ongoing responsibilities allocation.
- 4.6 These provisional allocations are based on current pupil data. Final allocations of the 2024/25 funding will use information from the Autumn 2023 census and are expected to be issued in December 2023.
- 4.7 Table 1 shows the potential funding and comparative increases in the DSG blocks for Bristol for 2024/25.

Table 1: Indicative 2024/25 DSG funding:

Comparative allocations	2024/25 Indicative DSG allocation	Comparative 2023/24 DSG allocation	£ change	% change
	£m	£m	£m	
Schools Block excl. growth*	343.968	333.991	9.978	2.99%
Central School Services Block	2.693	2.717	-0.024	-0.90%
High Needs Block	89.229	83.361	5.868	7.04%
Total	435.89	420.069	15.822	3.77%
Growth funding in school block	No data	2.202		
Early Years	No data	37.432		-

*2023/24 Schools Block funding was adjusted to include Mainstream Schools Additional Grant for comparative purpose.

Data source: [2024-25 NFF summary table](#)

5 Restrictions on use

- 5.1 For 2024-25 we will continue to set a local school funding formula following the 2023/24 transition to hard national funding formula and LA's were restricted in their options when setting the local formula for 2023/24. These restrictions will carry on being in place for 2024/25
- 5.2 Minimum funding levels per pupil are increasing again, setting a floor as to the minimum each pupil can attract into a school based upon Key Stage. These minimum funding levels remain a mandatory factor in the local formula and are set out in the table below.

Key Stage	2024-25 minimum per pupil funding levels
Primary (KS1 & KS2)	£4,655
KS3	£5,824
KS4	£6,389

- 5.3 For 2023/24, the MFG reduced to between +0.0% and +0.5% with the Schools' Forum agreeing to set this at +0.0%. For 2024/25, the range remains the same as 2023/24, between +0.0% and +0.5% and the Schools' Forum will need to discuss and agree what MFG rate is set for 2024/25 within this range.
- 5.4 As per 2023 / 24, the ESFA has indicated that LAs will not have any option over the funding factors to employ when composing the formula allocation; every NFF factor must be use, except for the locally determined premises factors that stay optional.
- 5.5 This intends that all local authorities will need to use all three deprivation factor (FSM, FSM6 and IDACI) along with low prior attainment (LPA), english language as an extra verbal communication (EAL), mobility, sparsity and the lump sum. Bristol already uses most of these.

The instruction is that Local governments need to move their local formula fact or information certainly 10 % closer to the NFF, apart from where local formulae are already "mirroring" the NFF. For this purpose, local factor value within 2.5% of the respective NFF value are deemed to be "mirroring" the NFF.

- 5.6 This instruction, combined with the fact that there are also minimum and maximum values being applied for individual factors, will limit Bristol's ability to

choose which factor values to enhance, in order to support local priorities. In previous years Bristol has opted to increase the Additional Education Need (AEN) factors, but depending on the final NFF unit values and boundaries this may no longer be possible.

- 5.7 What is staying the same is that the ESFA is denoting that again LA will be allowed to transfer up to 0.5% of their Schools Block to other blocks of the Dedicated School Grant (DSG), with school forum approval. A disapplication will be required for transfers above 0.5%, or for any amount where school's forum does not approve.
- 5.8 In 2023/24 we transferred £1.627m (0.5%) from the Schools Block to high needs block, this was earmarked specifically to support the Education Transformation Programme.
- 5.9 Consultation will be carried out with schools, prior to the November forum meeting to seek their views of the following items;
- Level of MFG to be applied.
 - Changes to formula factor funding values
 - Transfers between blocks
 - De-Delegation
- 5.10 School Forum is invited to reconvene the October 2023 Finance Sub-Group to review the restrictions on School Block use and the consequences for mainstream schools in Bristol in more detail, and to advise School forum ahead of submitting the final local formula for 2024-25 to the ESFA, in January 2024.

6 Mainstream schools additional grant (MSAG)

- 6.1 Mainstream schools additional grant (MSAG) has been rolled into the 2024-25 NFF

7 Growth funding

- 7.1 For 2024 to 2025, it will be calculated using the same methodology as previous year, based on the growth in pupil numbers between the October 2022 and October 2023 censuses. Growth funding to local authorities to manage increases in pupil numbers. From 2024-25 local authorities will need to provide growth funding where a school or academy has agreed with the local authority to provide an extra class in order to meet basic need in the area (either as a bulge class or as an ongoing commitment).

- 7.2 Local authorities will have to provide funding that is at minimum that is calculated using the following formula:

Primary Growth Factor value (£1,550) * Number of Pupils * ACA

8 De-delegation of services to Maintained Mainstream Schools

- 8.1 In order that schools and academies can be funded on the same basis, the funding for a number of services have been identified by the DfE as services that must be delegated as part of the initial formula.
- 8.2 Maintained mainstream schools, by a majority vote of the Schools Forum in each sector, can opt to 'de-delegate' the funding for their sector i.e. the LA will hold the funding centrally for the agreed services with the funding spent on that sector only. The agreed retention will not then be paid to maintained schools in the formula.
- 8.3 The LA will consult with maintained mainstream schools to canvass opinion on the de-delegated services. The result of this consultation will be reported to the November meeting of Schools Forum where the maintained school representatives will vote on which services to de-delegate for 2024/25.
- 8.4 The current de-delegated services in scope of the consultation are:

Primary schools

- Premises & employee insurance
- FSM assessment
- Maternity Supply Cover
- Trade Union Facility time
- Education Psychology
- Support for schools in financial difficulty
- Schools Improvement Service

Secondary schools

- Premises & employee insurance
- FSM assessment
- Maternity Supply Cover
- Trade Union Facility time
- Health & Safety Reps
- Education Psychology
- Schools Improvement Service

- 8.5 Forum members will recall the previous vote for the 2023/24 formula was to continue to support de-delegation of funding for most, except schools in financial difficulties where delegation was agreed but no funding was collected from schools. Primary representatives voted not to de-delegate new funding for Schools in Financial Difficulty, instead this area is to use surpluses accumulated over previous years in 2024/25.

9 Schools Improvement Service De-delegation

- 9.1 From 2023 to 2024, the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant ceased and is no longer paid to local authorities. The loss of this funding jeopardizes the viability of the service.
- 9.2 The school improvement service is seeking a contribution of approximately £86,000 (1 FTE) via de-delegation to continue to provide a core offer to maintained mainstream schools in 2024-2025. We intend to reenergize the service to support and enable strong school leadership whilst facilitating collaboration between system leaders, clusters and the LA to evolve, develop and share best practice across the sector driven by the moral purpose that all children deserve to be educated in successful schools. To inform policy and practice to raise standards and improve achievement for all groups of pupils, particularly those who achieve less well than their peers, those who are most disadvantaged and those with SEND. To also provide additional capacity for the service to enable bespoke school improvement and other services to be available to schools on a traded basis, where school leaders choose to buy in services provided by the Local Authority.

At present, in September 2023, there are approximately 16,200 pupils in maintained mainstream schools. At these present pupil numbers, to obtain a contribution of £86,000, Forum would be asked to agree a de-delegation per-pupil rate of £5.31 and to continue including this item in the de-delegation consultation.

The consultation is scheduled to commence on 3rd October 2023 and will last for 6 weeks; ending on the 14th November 2023 in readiness for the November reporting. Following the closure of the consultation, School Forum will be asked to vote on whether to support each area of de-delegation for 2024-25 at the meeting in November 2023. The report officers will bring to School Forum in November information on the accumulated surpluses of de-delegated areas in order to inform the vote for 2024/25.

Bristol Schools Forum

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan Update

Date of meeting:	Tuesday 26 th September 2023
Time of meeting:	5pm
Venue:	City Hall
Author:	Angel Lai / Satvinder Singh

1. Purpose of report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to update Bristol Schools Forum on the refreshed DSG Deficit Management Plan (“the Plan”).

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. Schools Forum is invited to:

- note the update to the plan.
- feedback and comments as appropriate; and
- note the Plan will be presented to Schools Forum, High Needs and Early Years subgroups regularly and at least on a termly basis.

3. Background and context

DSG Current Position

3.1. The DSG ended the 2022/23 financial year with an in-year deficit of £15.031m or a cumulative deficit of £39.681m including £24.650m deficit brought forward from the previous years.

3.2. The DSG is forecasting to overspend by £18.5m in 2023/24, which is broadly in line with £18.7m in-year forecast deficit position reported in July 2023. The main driver of forecast overspend is in High Needs top up and placements costs. As financial benefits from DSG transformation program are yet to be quantified, this is do nothing unmitigated position.

Table 1 - Bristol Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24	2022/23 b/f balance	Gross DSG funding / Budget 2023/24*	P05 Gross DSG forecast outturn	In-year variance as at P05	Cummulative c/f forecast position as at P05
£'000					
Schools Block	(787)	323,851	323,851	(0)	(787)
De-delegation	(527)	0	(1)	(1)	(528)
Central School services Block	8	2,717	2,709	(8)	(0)
Early Years	(605)	37,432	38,333	902	296
High Needs Block	42,520	86,675	103,221	16,546	59,067
High Needs Transformation	(928)	1,627	2,677	1,049	121
Funding	0	(452,302)	(452,302)	0	0
Total (Unmitigated position)	39,680	(0)	18,488	18,488	58,170
Mitigations (budget v.s. forecast in 2023-24)		(3,180)	(2,112)	(1,068)	(2,112)
Total - Mitigated position	39,680		16,376	(1,068)	56,058

* Bristol gross DSG Allocations, including recoupment and deductions for NNDR, and for direct funding of high needs places directly passported to schools by ESFA totalling £255.752m as at 20th July 2023.

3.3. The High Needs Block (HNB) element of the DSG carried forward a cumulative deficit of £42.52 million from 2022/23. The 2023/24 Period 5 forecast position against the HNB is an in-year deficit of £16.5 million which is mainly due to an increase in EHCP & complexity of CYP's within SEN. This brings the cumulative forecast deficit position to £59.1 million.

3.4. The cumulative deficit of £59.1 million in HNB is mainly due to increased demand for Special Educational Needs provision within the HNB. Overspend was predominately caused by Top Up Funding £5million, Special Placements (Pre & Post 16) £7.4 million, ISP £2 million & Teachers Pay & Pension £2million.

4. DSG Management Plan latest forecast

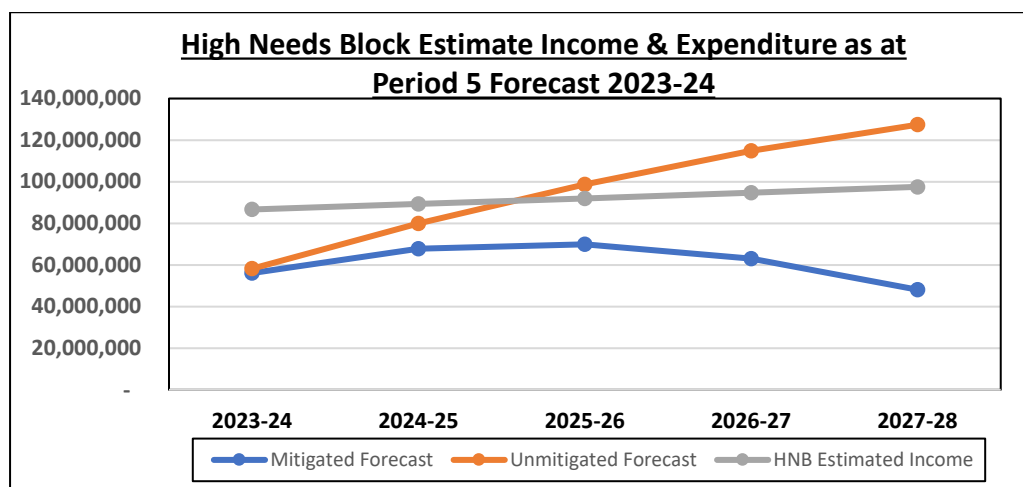
The overview of the DSG Management Plan position that was presented to the Schools Forum in July 2023 showed a cumulative forecasted unmitigated deficit as at the end of 2027/28 to be approx. £128.2million which is broadly in with the latest forecast position demonstrated in below Table where cumulative unmitigated deficit position will reach £127.4m in do nothing position as at August 2023.

The summary table for the DSG Management Plan shows the income, expenditure, mitigated & unmitigated position as at Period 5. Please note that DSG Management Plan is an iterative document, mitigation figures shown are indicative only and subject to extensive consultation and iterative equality impact assessment.

		Outturn					
Table DSG MP: DSG Forecast Position		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Income/Surplus should be shown as negative		Forecast £000	Forecast £000	Forecast £000	Forecast £000	Forecast £000	Forecast £000
1	Brought Forward unmitigated deficit	£24,480	£39,577	£58,232	£79,906	£98,738	£114,929
2	Total Expenditure	£438,486	£470,957	£476,569	£476,404	£476,522	£475,669
3	DSG Income	(£423,388)	(£452,302)	(£453,275)	(£455,953)	(£458,712)	(£461,553)
4	Schools Block 0.5% (Subject to SF Approval)			(£1,619)	(£1,619)	(£1,619)	(£1,619)
Funding gap carry forward to future years		£39,577	£58,232	£79,906	£98,738	£114,929	£127,425
Mitigation Proposals							
5	Annual Indicative Proposed Mitigations	£0	(£2,112)	(£8,965)	(£11,473)	(£12,574)	(£12,574)
6	DBV Stretched confidence benefits - annual	£0	£0	(£1,035)	(£5,227)	(£10,526)	(£14,826)
Total Mitigations		£0	(£2,112)	(£10,000)	(£16,700)	(£23,100)	(£27,400)
7	Mitigations cumulative	£0	(£2,112)	(£12,112)	(£28,812)	(£51,912)	(£79,312)
8	Funding Gap after proposed mitigations	£39,577	£56,120	£67,794	£69,926	£63,017	£48,113

As shown in the chart below, the latest iteration of the plan shows the forecasted unmitigated deficit to be £127.4 million, this is a reduction of £800k.

The Chart below illustrates, the do-nothing unmitigated position, indicative mitigations forecast and the forecasted DSG income and shows the potential for narrowing the gap.



- 4.1. The £800k decrease is primarily driven by the reduction in population between 4- to 14-year-olds within Bristol. Based on the population data used from the ONS website for our forecasting the average reduction within this age demographic between 2024 to 2028 is (0.80%). When looking at the population within Bristol aged 0 to 25 in 2023 the analysis shows approximately 8.1% of the total are CYP's within the High Needs Block. This is estimated to reduce to 7.5% by 2028.
- 4.2. The Plan has been updated to reflect further guidance from the DfE concerning the rate of growth within complexity of needs to build into the financial model for future years. The assumption is that the HNB income will increase by 3% from 2024-25 to subsequent years thereafter.
- 4.3. It is worth noting that forecast for 2023-24 and onwards are based on demand forecast (number of children in the system) and including national trend plus

contingency circa 15% taking into consideration of increased complexity, backlog and 10% growth based on Service advice.

5. DSG Management Plan mitigation proposals

5.1. As part of the Education Transformation program and delivering better value (DBV) program a range of mitigation proposals are being developed and could potentially bring the HNB to a sustainable footing pending on further due diligence & formal consultation. A list of latest mitigations forecasts are available in Table below, DBV original mitigation proposals is available in Appendix 1.

Key Mitigations/savings	Mitigations/ Savings forecast 2023-24	Mitigations/ Savings forecast 2024-25	Mitigations/ Savings forecast 2025-26	Mitigations/ Savings forecast 2026-27	Mitigations/ Savings forecast 2027-28	Mitigations/ Savings forecast 2028-29	Mitigations/ Savings forecast 2029-30
SCHEME A1, A2 & A3 Reduce the reliance and placements in independent non-maintained schools, including out of authority, by increasing the availability and suitability of local provision.	£0	£3,540,873	£4,954,640	£4,954,640	£4,954,640	£4,954,640	£4,954,640
SCHEME B1 Review the effectiveness of national SEND Budget in schools and settings and ensure non-statutory top up funding to mainstream schools is robust, appropriate, time limited and impactful	£1,700,000	£1,625,282	£1,896,163	£2,107,043	£2,107,043	£2,107,043	£2,107,043
SCHEME C5 & C6 Support and drive mainstream schools to meet a higher level of need, in a more cost effective way whilst maintaining the quality of provision.	£0	£400,242	£492,204	£492,204	£492,204	£492,204	£492,204
SCHEME D2 Therapies Framework. Ensure that therapies that are mainly associated with EHCP are appropriate	£240,000	£240,000	£240,000	£240,000	£240,000	£240,000	£240,000
SCHEME E1 Review the methodology of top up and funding uplifts to ensure best value is delivered	£0	£1,661,156	£2,262,078	£2,872,969	£2,872,969	£2,872,969	£2,872,969
SCHEME F1 Review post-16 offer to ensure full alignment to DFE/ESFA guidance	£0	£1,106,446	£1,436,736	£1,676,026	£1,676,026	£1,676,026	£1,676,026
SCHEME G2 Review and reform of the Alternative Learning Provision model and funding to improve outcomes and ensure best value provision	£172,000	£172,000	£172,000	£172,000	£172,000	£172,000	£172,000
DBV DBV structured confidence benefits - annual (Please see DBV Proposals Table 1 for further information)	£0	£1,034,996	£5,237,120	£10,826,030	£14,826,030	£14,826,030	£14,826,030
PLEASE NOTE: The mitigated savings for financial years 2023-25 & 2029-30 are left as 2027-28 and require further due diligence							
Total savings	£2,112,000	£10,900,000	£16,760,000	£23,100,000	£27,400,000	£27,400,000	£27,400,000

Subject to validation and final consultation, the latest forecast mitigation proposals could improve the forecasted financial position by £2.1million in 2023/24 and up to a cumulative of £12.6million by 2027/28 if fully supported by the public. Please note there is a reduction of £1m mitigation in 2023/24 due to further due diligence work and delay in appointment of delivery partner to deliver workstream two proposals.

5.2. Whilst we continue to work with the DfE to drive the improvements required in outcomes for children with additional and special educational needs and achieve a balance in year position, that can be sustained and demonstrable reduces the deficit, we will need to consider all potential funding sources. The Council has made significant investment in the General fund budget of circa £4m per year since 2022-23 to improve SEN service and fund Home to School Transport (HTST) and similarly have significant pressures in year of the same magnitude which will be recurrent in 2024/25 and beyond. We recognise the collaborative approach adopted to date and the significant contribution that schools have and continue to make in investing in the Education Transformation programme. In considering future budgets, we have provisionally included the 0.5% transfer in our latest forecast understanding this will require approval from Bristol Schools Forum.

5.3. Based on latest forecast (as of August 2023), which was broadly in line with Newton's (DfE DBV delivering partner) forecast, it is estimated that High Needs Block could achieve a balanced budget position in 2026-27 if DBV stretched confidence benefits materialise, which is subject to further due diligence and formal consultation. Further updates on DBV program are covered in Education Director's updates.

6. National Context

6.1. Any local authority that has an overall deficit on its DSG account at the end of the 2021 to 2022 financial year, or whose DSG surplus has substantially reduced during the year, must co-operate with the DfE in handling that situation. The ESFA have designed a template to help local authorities manage their DSG and Bristol is using this template.

6.2. The Plan is intended to help LAs to develop evidence-based and strategic plans covering the provision available for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Completion of the Plan will enable us to comply with the DfE requirement in Paragraph 5.2 of the Condition of the DSG Grant, see below an extract from the Grant conditions:

Further conditions relating to DSG overspends and deficits is available on ESFA website, in the link [DSG MP conditions](#)

6.3. The latest SEND and alternative provision roadmap paper was published in March 2023 paving the way for legislative change. This roadmap summarises the actions that will be taken to improve the special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision system in England. These include national standards; role of schools (mainstream and AP) and early years; education, health, and care plans; accountability and metrics and delivery support.

The consultation called "SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time". Sets out proposed reforms to the SEND and alternative provision (AP) system that seek to address the following key challenges:

- Successful transitions and preparation for adulthood
- A skilled workforce and excellent leadership
- Strengthened accountabilities and clear routes of redress.
- A financially sustainable system delivering improved outcomes.

The full details of the paper can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-and-alternative-provision-improvement-plan/send-and-alternative-provision-roadmap>

6.4. Statutory Instrument (SI) No. 12 of 2020: The then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government laid the statutory instrument (SI) no 1212 before Parliament on 6 November 2020 and it came into force on 29 November 2020. The impact of the SI is to amend the current accounting

regulations to allow all DSG deficits to be carried over in a separate dedicated account and therefore not at a charge to the Council's revenue account for the term of the override.

The SI is time-limited and was due to end in March 2023 but has just been extended for a further three years to allow councils with the short-term flexibility needed to implement changes to move High Needs to a sustainable position.

There is no statutory undertaking to underwrite this deficit, the Council will need to ensure that good progress is being made to deliver the mitigations outlined in the table in 5.1 and to ensure there are adequate usable reserves (as agreed with the Council external auditors) to cover any DSG deficit when preparing the Council's accounts, if the period of the SI is not extended by government beyond 2026 or no additional funding is available to address the accumulated historic deficits.

7. Risks and Challenges

7.1. The forecast presented above contain some risks and challenges, examples of which are outlined below:

- Ofsted re-inspection may highlight new areas to address (as inspection framework is tightened and strengthened)
- The risk is that some of the proposed mitigations may not deliver a financial benefit and extensive growth within this area may outweigh the financial benefit of the mitigations that are implemented.
- Higher than expected increase in Education Health and Care plans.
- Cost of living crisis
- High level of inflation

7.2. Maintained Nursery Schools

- Increasing complexity of needs therefore requiring specialist provision.
- Post COVID recovery for Early Years settings due to no central government financial support.
- Maintained Nursery Schools not all being able to submit a deficit recovery plan that brings the provision into a surplus position within 3 years and therefore more robust plans coupled with financial support will be required to support the sector to restore its financial health and recover from its historic deficits (circa £6.9m).

8. Opportunities

8.1. The opportunities within the current system are summarized below:

- Delivering Best Value (DBV) - the council has been accelerated to Tranche 1 of the programme and the engagement has commenced. This means that the DFE will provide support and challenge to the local authority on the Plan and more specifically the indicative mitigations.
- Change in Prime Minister and Cabinet and potential for additional income in the autumn budget.
- Proactive Schools Forum engagement via Early Years and High Needs Working Groups and key stakeholders.
- Opportunity to join the Safety Valve programme.
- In respect of LA maintained schools in Financial difficulty including Nursery Schools,
 - funding source to temporarily support schools have been identified and is proposed to Schools' Forum for approval in September 2023
 - ESFA additional funding for Maintained schools in financial difficulty (note: further details is yet to be published)

9. Early Years Funding Working Group

9.1. The Early Years Working Group meets just prior to Schools Form to enable LA officers to report program updates to school's forum representatives. This provides an opportunity for questions, challenges, and discussion. The working group will reconvene in November.

10. Equalities Impact Assessment

10.1. The Plan has been developed to improve outcomes for children and young people and achieve financial sustainability. The proposals support the needs of children and young people with SEND to be met earlier through evidence-based interventions and aim to reduce our reliance on high-cost placements in the non-maintained and independent sector, by ensuring that children with SEND can get a good education at a school close to their home.

10.2. The proposals in this report are at varying degrees of development with some measures in their infancy. All measures have been subject to screening and officers have undertaken initial equality impact assessments (EQIA) and believe that there are no equality implications. The assessments will evolve as consultation and engagement continues and propositions are further developed. Links to the relevant EQIA will be in the Mitigation paper.

11. Financial Implications

11.1. No financial implications arise from completing the DSG Management Plan template. It is, however, expected to be a valuable tool in developing an effective response to the DSG deficit recovery requirements. The road to financial recovery will become clearer and more specific as the Plan evolves.

11.2. The Council will continue to lobby central government for funding increases which properly match the levels of need in Local Authorities such as Bristol with the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet member with responsibility for Children's Services, Education and Equalities actively part of the lobbying process.

Appendix 1 – DBV original mitigation proposal:

High Level Summary					
Mitigation Briefing	Note : Figures are indicatives annual expenditure reduction could be subject to change following consultation and further due diligence				
	A	B	C	D	E
	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
THEMES					
A. Reduce the reliance and placements in independent non maintained schools.	£1,403,000	£4,437,342	£6,193,300	£6,193,300	£6,193,300
B. Review the effectiveness of notional SEND Budget.	£1,693,002	£2,031,603	£2,370,203	£2,708,804	£2,708,804
C. Support and drive mainstream schools to meet a higher level of need.	£232,178	£612,802	£615,330	£615,330	£615,330
D. Therapies Framework.	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000
E. Review the methodology of top up and funding uplifts.	£0	£2,113,947	£2,852,598	£3,591,249	£3,591,249
F. Review post - 16 offer to ensure full alignment to DFE/ESFA guidance	£0	£1,495,558	£1,794,669	£2,093,781	£2,093,781
G. Review and reform of the Alternative Learning Provision.	£215,000	£215,000	£215,000	£215,000	£215,000
TOTAL MITIGATIONS	£3,843,181	£11,206,252	£14,341,100	£15,717,463	£15,717,463
Less Programme Optimim Bias (20%)	-768,636	-2,241,250	-2,868,220	-3,143,493	-3,143,493
RISK ADJUSTED DRAFT MITIGATIONS	3,074,545	8,965,001	11,472,880	12,573,970	12,573,970

Bristol Schools Forum
Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Programme

Date of meeting:	26 September 2023
Time of meeting:	5.00 pm
Venue:	Virtual/City Hall
Officer Presenting Report	Reena Bhogal-Welsh

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform and update the School's Forum on the progress of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Programme (the Programme).

2. Recommendation

School's Forum is invited to:

- 2.1 Review the progress to date and next steps for implementation of the DBV programme.

3. Background – Delivering Better Value in SEND (As outlined in the School Forum Report 12 July 2023)

- 3.1 Alongside existing plans, the Department for Education recognises the challenge faced by Local Authorities and is running intervention programmes, including Safety Valve Agreements and Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV in SEND). In late 2022, Bristol was invited to participate in the DBV in SEND programme. A paper outlining the preliminary findings of the DBV programme was presented to Schools Forum on 12 January 2023.
- 3.2 Upon completion of a 6-month diagnostic period, a grant application based on diagnostic findings was submitted to the DfE. In total Bristol secured a £1m grant to pump-prime deficit mitigation interventions identified through the programme.

3.3 The diagnostic identified that the unmitigated deficit position of the High Needs Block will increase to £116m (lower bound) over the next 5 years. This is primarily due to an increase in spend in the following provision areas:

- Increase in number of EHCPs issued
- Non-statutory top up funding (mainstream provision)
- Bristol-based specialist provision (cost of placement and increased numbers of pupils entering special schools)
- Post-16 provision

3.4 The focus of Bristol's grant application to the DfE focused on the delivery of 2 key workstreams:

***Workstream 1:
Strengthening relationships between the school, families and children
(improving the experiences of children with SEND in mainstream settings)***

We will work in partnership with a cross phase group of education partners, families and children to develop and implement a pilot programme to improve the experience of children with SEND in mainstream education. The pilot will focus on enhancing school-based inclusion practice and improving school-to-family communication with the aim of rebuilding parental confidence in current SEND arrangements and reducing the demand for specialist placements, in situations when a child's needs can be effectively met within mainstream. The aim of the trial is to create an eco-system of inclusive Bristol schools to act as inclusion champions, provide peer-to-peer support, disseminate learning and model best practice to support further role out across the Bristol education system.

***Workstream 2:
Strengthening relationships between the school and the wider system
(Creating fair, transparent, consistent and financially sustainable processes underpinned by robust monitoring and accountability frameworks)***

We will undertake a further analysis and review of Bristol's existing SEND funding model to identify, define and measure problems relating to efficiency, effectiveness and value for money. A detailed options appraisal will be developed for full public consultation in the areas of:

- a) Effective and sustainable use of non-statutory top up funding
- b) Standardisation of statutory top-up funding and the model for funding Bristol's special schools (maintained and academies)
- c) Realignment of Post-16 funding to ensure adherence to current DfE/ESFA guidelines – including review of use of non-statutory top up funding.

Our intention is to create a fair, transparent, consistent and financially sustainable model, that achieves good outcomes for CYP with SEND through robust monitoring and accountability frameworks. We will use co-production with parents/carers, children and education partners to ensure the change process is collaborative, clearly communicated, understood and fit for purpose. Robust analysis of the key impact measures, relating to ensuring more CYP's needs are effectively met earlier and within mainstream education will be key, along with the changes as a mechanism to increase parental confidence in Bristol's mainstream provision. The use of external benchmarking and adherence to current and future legislation will underpin all transformation.

4. Background information and context of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme

4.1 The DBV Programme is part of a wider programme of work to address the deficit in the Dedicated School's Grant (DSG). This Programme includes work set out in the High Needs Block Recovery Plan, which was approved by School's Forum in September 2022.

4.2 The DSG programme is part of a wider *Our Families* programme focusing on the transformation of children and young people services in Bristol. The *Our Families* Board is now Chaired by the Director of Children's Transformation following the departure of the Executive Director for Children and Education.

5. Update on the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme since July 2023

5.1 A DSG Programme Team and Steering Group has been established. The Programme Team consists of a Strategic Programme Lead for SEND, a Senior Project Manager, 2 x Project Managers and a Project Support Officer. These roles are funded using a mix of the £1.6m allocated from the High Needs Block in April 2023 to support the wider transformation agenda and the £1m DBV grant allocation.

5.2 A Programme Governance structure has been established to align with the existing SEND Governance Structure in Bristol (Figure 1)

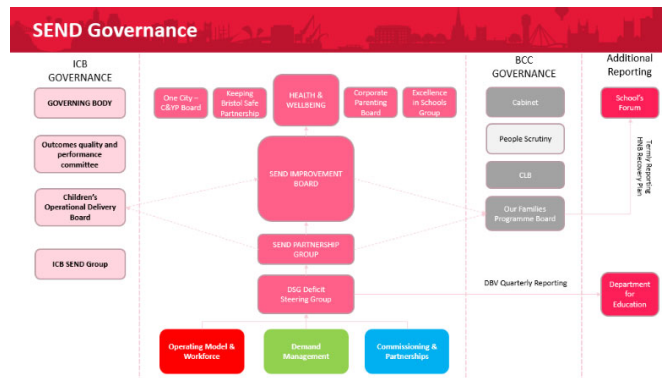


Fig. 1 - Programme Governance

- 5.3 A multi-stakeholder planning workshop to develop Workstream 1 took place on the 6 July 2023. Workstream 1 will be delivered using a *Test and Learn* methodology, working with small groups of schools to improve relationships between schools and families. A minimum of 4 Test and Learn pilots will take place between September 2023 and 30 March 2024. The first of these Test and Learn pilots will commence on the 19 September 2023, with a presentation on the approach to the 4 schools. Test and Learn Pilot 1 will focus on reviewing and codesigning SEND Guidance Reports with staff and parents/carers in 4 participating schools.
- 5.4 A combination of inclusion data will be used to identify a group of priority schools to take part in the Test and Learn pilots. By combining these data sets, it is expected that up to 20 schools will be identified with a split of 15 primary and 5 secondary settings. The intention is to work with up to 12 of these schools in groups of up to 4 between September 2023 and April 2024. The evaluation work will be completed to inform school participation in Test and Learn Pilot 2. Due to time constraints leading up to the summer holidays a reduced selection criteria were used. The schools selected for Test and Learn Pilot 1 were identified using comparisons in pupil premium and education health and plan (EHCP) percentages.
- 5.5 [Private Public Ltd.](#), in collaboration with [Social Finance](#), were selected to lead the delivery of Workstream 2 following a full competitive procurement process - completed in July 2023. Workstream 2 is currently in the analysis phase. This has included interviews with internal and external stakeholders (schools), analysis of SEND funding data and national benchmarking and

best practice. The analysis stage also includes a detailed mapping of the existing decision-making and funding process.

- 5.6 An options paper outlining proposed changes to the way Bristol City Council uses High Needs Block funding will be put forward for a full 6-week consultation phase in early October 2023. Following this consultation phase a final recommendation will be presented to Bristol's City Council's Cabinet for approval in late January 2024. Due to delays in the procurement process the initial consultation and decision date have shifted. The new dates have been approved following a recent review meeting with the DfE. School's Forum will be provided with details on how to engage with the consultation. Additionally, the School's Forum will be provided with a full report on the outcome of the consultation at the November forum.
- 5.7 The contract for Workstream 2 is significantly below the initial £600,000 estimate. Bristol City Council has been given permission by the Department of Education to submit a proposal to use the underspend to support the implementation of Workstream 2 following the Cabinet decision. Funding must be spent in the financial year 2023/24. An update on this proposal will be presented to a future School's Forum.