

# Decision Pathway – Report



**PURPOSE:** Key decision

**MEETING:** Cabinet

**DATE:** 07 February 2023

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme Grant Allocation</b>	
<b>Ward(s)</b>	All wards	
<b>Author:</b> Richard Hanks	<b>Job title:</b> (Interim) Director Education & Skills	
<b>Cabinet lead:</b> Cllr Asher Craig, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Equalities	<b>Executive Director lead:</b> Abi Gbago, Executive Director Children and Education	
<b>Proposal origin:</b> BCC Staff		
<b>Decision maker:</b> Cabinet Member <b>Decision forum:</b> Cabinet		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>  To seek approval to accept and spend a Department for Education (DfE) Delivering Better Value in SEND grant in the sum of £1m to support the implementation of reforms to manage and mitigate identified cost drivers within the SEND high needs system.		
<b>Evidence Base:</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over recent years, rising demand and other pressures have contributed to many local authorities accruing deficits on their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the Covid pandemic has exacerbated these issues. In Bristol, the overspend on the DSG High Needs Block budget (i.e. the funding that supports provision for pupils and students with SEND) has been increasing year-on-year to the point at which it has become unsustainable. The forecast deficit for the current financial year is approx. £44m. The DfE is running some <a href="#">intervention programmes</a> to assist local authorities with deficits to achieve high needs spend sustainability.</li><li>Bristol was invited to participate in the DfE’s ‘Delivering Better Value in SEND (‘BCC’) (DBV) support programme in February 2022. The DBV programme provides dedicated support and funding to 55 local authorities with substantial deficit issues to reform their high needs systems. Bristol joined the first tranche of local authorities starting DBV in September 2022.</li><li>The DBV is a 3-year transformation programme run as follows:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Pre-engagement</b> strategy period (February to July 2022): Bristol met with the DfE to discuss the programme in detail, the nature of support the DfE would be providing and how Bristol will best work with the DfE to drive and achieve the objectives of the programme.</li><li><b>Phase 1, 6 months</b> (September 2022 to March 2023): The DfE provides project and change management capacity to support Bristol in engaging with its key stakeholders and conducting a diagnostic process to identify the underlying cost drivers of its high needs system and potential reforms to manage/mitigate these cost drivers more effectively. And, support to produce an evidence-based grant application using the outputs of the diagnostic process.</li><li><b>Phase 2, 30 months</b> (est. April 2023 onwards): Implementation of the agreed reforms with ongoing support and challenge by DfE officials.</li></ul></li></ol>		

4. The DBV programme sits alongside and complements existing and ongoing work within Bristol City Council ('BCC') to manage the DSG deficit. A summary of the current indicative DSG mitigations was presented to Bristol Schools Forum in September 2022. A further report on the DBV Programme went to Bristol Schools Forum in January 2023 (see Background Documents below)
5. The DBV grant application will include:
  - Summary of the findings of the diagnostic
  - Breakdown of how the grant money will be used
  - Expected return on investment (i.e., the sum of target opportunity areas)
  - Risks to not realising the expected return on investment
6. These proposals are subject to EQIAs. Those that are already in progress have full EQIAs that are updated regularly. Those that are proposed have draft EQIAs in progress that will be shaped as the work progresses. All EQIAs will be available as part of the engagement and consultation process and will evolve based on feedback from stakeholders.

**Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:**

That Cabinet:

1. Approve, subject to meeting the programme requirements, and any associated grant conditions, the acceptance of £1m from the Department for Education to fund the implementation of reforms.
2. Authorise, the Executive Director for Children and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Equalities to take all steps required to accept and spend the funding including procuring and awarding contracts (including any individual contracts over £500k) necessary for the implementation of the programme from October 2022 to March 2025, in-line with the maximum budget envelopes outlined in this report.
3. Note the submission of a grant application on 1 February 2023 to Department for Education (DfE) for the Delivering Better Value in SEND grant.

**Corporate Strategy alignment:**

This programme is well aligned to priorities for our Children and Young People set out within the Corporate Strategy, **CYP3: Equity in education**

Over the course of this Corporate Strategy, we expect our SEND provision to continue improving, co-designing appropriate support with children and families to meet their needs. We want to create the right conditions that will enable more young people with SEND and from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter further education, employment, or training. Supporting children and young people to experience an inclusive education that meets their academic, health, social and emotional needs is a crucial step to entering employment and becoming economically active within the city, which supports their lifelong wellbeing.

Our ambition is that children and young people have access to an education that develops their potential both in what they learn and who they become, so that they have skills for life and work. Additionally, an education that is inclusive and values diversity, and that provides opportunities where they learn from each other and benefit from understanding their different experiences is important. In achieving this, we will work both directly and with partners across the entire system to maximise opportunities for all. This includes access to further education, higher education, and other training providers to help people find pathways to employment; acknowledging and building upon much existing work by the council and partners in these sectors to address the educational disadvantage in the city.

**City Benefits:**

That funding which supports provision for pupils and students with SEND is spent in fair, transparent and sustainable way.

**Consultation Details:**

- Consultation and engagement on plans to address the DSG deficit have been ongoing over a period of time. A first iteration of the DSG Management Plan\* was presented to Bristol Schools Forum in November 2021 with feedback invited on the proposed mitigations.
- A second iteration of the DSG Management Plan was presented in March 2022, and a third in September 2022.
- Following the September meeting, a series of engagement activities took place seeking views on the indicative mitigation proposals, including Head teachers, Governors, SENDCos and parent carer forums. An online survey has also been undertaken.
- A further report was presented to Bristol Schools Forum on 12 January 2023 on the development the Delivering Better Value SEND programme, key areas of focus for the grant application and next steps (the report is appended to this Cabinet report)

\* Local authorities with an overall deficit on their DSG account at the end of a financial year must be able to present a plan to the DfE for managing their future DSG spend.

**Background Documents:**

1. DfE [Guidance on our work with local authorities](#), October 2022
2. DfE [Sustainability in high needs systems: guidance for local authorities](#), June 2022
3. [The Dedicated Schools Grant \(DSG\) Management Plan Update including mitigations](#) Sept 22
4. [6a Appendix A DSG Management Plan.pdf](#) Sept 22
5. [6i 2022-09-27 DSG Mitigations Covering Report.pdf](#) Sept 22
6. [Appendix A DSG Mitigations plan](#) Sept 22
7. [Report to Bristol Schools Forum, 12 January 2023 – Delivering Better Value in SEND](#) Jan 23

<b>Revenue Cost</b>	<b>£1m</b>	<b>Source of Revenue Funding</b>	Department for Education, Delivering Better Value in SEND grant allocation
<b>Capital Cost</b>	N/A	<b>Source of Capital Funding</b>	N/A
<b>One off cost</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Ongoing cost</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Saving Proposal</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Income generation proposal</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

**Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:**

1. Finance Advice: This report seeks approval to accept and spend £1m of Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme funding. This funding aims to support local authorities to improve delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst trying to ensure services are sustainable.

As reported to Cabinet and Schools Forum in January 2023, the High Needs block is forecasting an in-year overspend of £18.8m at period 8, with an anticipated year end cumulative overspend of £43.5m (Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Forecast position on overall DSG for 2022/23 at P8 (to end of November 2022) extrapolated)**

<i>All figures £'000</i>	<i>End of year b/f Deficit</i>	<i>Transfers</i>	<i>b/f Deficit</i>	<i>DSG Funding 2022/23</i>	<i>Forecast Outturn P8 2022/23</i>	<i>In-year variance</i>	<i>Forecast Carry- forward P8 2022/23</i>
Schools Block	(1,517)	1,517	0	304,661	304,661	0	(557)
De-delegation Schools	(504)		(504)	0	(0)	0	(504)
Central Block	8		8	2,742	2,742	0	8
Early Years	(472)		(472)	35,987	36,455	468	(4)
High Needs Block	27,876	(1,517)	26,358	78,466	96,641	18,175	44,533
Education Transformation	(740)		(740)	1,531	2,271	740	0
Funding	-		-	(423,388)	(442,213)	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,650</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24,650</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18,825</b>	<b>18,825</b>	<b>43,475</b>

The DBV programme will provide dedicated support and funding to 55 local authorities. An initial flat rate amount of £1 million will be allocated to local authorities to support their implementation plans. This funding will help contribute to identifying and support the implementation of key improvement initiatives. Spending proposals will need to be met from within the £1m funding envelope and satisfy any grant funding conditions and time frames.

**Finance Business Partner:** Andrew Osei, 13 January 2023

**2. Legal Advice:** The submission of the bid for grant funding raises no particular legal issues. If successful, the procurement process must be conducted in line with the 2015 Procurement Regulations and the Councils own procurement rules. Legal services will advise and assist officers with regard to the conduct of the procurement process and the resulting contractual arrangements.

**Legal Team Leader:** Husinara Jones, Team Leader/Solicitor, 11 January 2023

**3. Implications on IT:** I can see no implications on IT in regards to this activity.

**IT Team Leader:** Gavin Arbuckle – Head of Service Improvement and Performance, 13 January 2023

**4. HR Advice:** As the proposals are set out in the report, there are no current HR implications for Bristol City Council employees. However, once the proposals have been agreed and implementation plans are in place, we may need to revisit the plans and assess the impact of any changes that may affect our employees.

**HR Partner:** Lorna Laing - HR Business Partner – People, 13 January 2023

<b>EDM Sign-off</b>	Christina Gray,	7 December 2022
<b>Cabinet Member sign-off</b>	Cllr Asher Craig	12 December 2022
<b>For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off</b>	Mayor's Office	19 December 2022

<b>Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix D – Risk assessment</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal</b>	<b>NO</b>

<b>Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix G – Financial Advice</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix H – Legal Advice</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix I – Exempt Information</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix J – HR advice</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix K – ICT</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix L – Procurement</b>	<b>NO</b>