

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

<b>Date of meeting:</b>	12 July 2023
<b>Time of meeting:</b>	5.00 pm
<b>Venue:</b>	Virtual/City Hall
<b>Officer Presenting Report</b>	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 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 Programme.**

**3. Background – Delivering Better Value in SEND (As outlined in the School Forum Report 28 March 2023)**

- 3.1 Alongside existing plans, the DfE recognises the challenge faced by LAs and is running intervention programmes, Safety Valve Agreements and Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV in SEND). Bristol was invited to participate in DBV in SEND. 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. The original estimate for the grant allocation was £1.07m as detailed in the report on the 28 March 2023. 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 roll 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. Progress of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme to date**

- 4.1 The DBV Programme is part of a wider programme to address the deficit in the Dedicated School's Grant (DSG). This wider programme also includes the Maintained Nursery Transformation project, as well as workstreams and projects outlined in the High Needs 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* programme brings together all change activity across Children, Families, Safer Communities, Education, Skills and Learning. It is focused on whole system change in the re-design of effective services with, and for, children and families. The *Our Families* Board is Chaired by the Executive Director for Children and Education. The delivery of the change programme is overseen by a Director of Transformation.
- 4.3 An external consultant with significant experience working with Local Authorities to improve SEND services, has been recruited as a Strategic Programme Manager to oversee the DSG Programme. Funding for this role will be met via the £1.6m allocated from the High Needs Block in April 2023 to support the wider transformation agenda.
- 4.4 Internal capacity has been identified from core Bristol City Council Services to manage and oversee the delivery of projects and workstreams. An example of the roles that have been joint funded to drive this transformation work include programme and project management, finance, and data capacity. Officers from within the Education and Skills directorate have been identified to lead the delivery and oversight of DBV

Workstreams 1 & 2. £300,000 worth of DBV funding has been allocated to the resourcing of this programme.

- 4.5 A planning workshop to develop Workstream 1 will take place on the 6 July. Internal and external partners from schools, the local authority, parent/carer support services and health partners will help shape the project. The project is scheduled to begin delivery in September 2023. The project will use a test and learn methodology to understand the impact changes in practice have on the relationships between schools and families with children with SEND in Bristol. School inclusion data sets will be used to identify priority schools to take part in the project which is due to commence on the 4 September 2023. Workstream 1 pilots are planned to be completed by 30 March 2023. £100,000 worth of DBV funding has been allocated to the delivery of this workstream.
  
- 4.6 Bristol City Council is undertaking a procurement process to secure a delivery partner to lead Workstream 2 of the DBV programme. It is expected that the delivery partner will begin working on Workstream 2 in early July. It is expected that the delivery partner will begin the analysis phase of Workstream 2 in early July and complete this phase of the project by the end of August 2023. The delivery partner will develop an options paper outlining potential changes to the way Bristol City Council use the High Needs Block funding. Following completion of this phase the delivery partner will oversee a city wide, multi-stakeholder 6-week consultation on the options paper. This will begin in early September. Once completed findings from the consultation will be used to inform a final recommendation which will be presented to Bristol City Council's Cabinet for a key decision. Estimated date of completion December 2023. £600,000 worth of DBV funding has been allocated to the recruitment of a delivery partner for this workstream.
  
- 4.7 Due to the recruitment of project resources and the development of compliant procurement options, the indicative timescales outlined in the original grant application to the Department of Education have slipped. Current implementation plans seek to bring both workstreams back within delivery tolerance.
  
- 4.8 A further update on progress against the delivery of both workstreams will be provided in the first School's Forum of the new academic year.

