

Bristol Schools Forum
Dedicated Schools Grant Programme – Including Delivering Better Value in
SEND and Belonging with SEND updates.

Date of meeting:	28 November 2023
Time of meeting:	5.00 pm
Venue:	City Hall
Officer Presenting Report	Reena Bhogal-Welsh

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform and update the Schools Forum on the progress of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Programme (DSG Programme) – specifically Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND, Belonging with SEND (BwS) and EHCP Process Redesign
- 1.2 To gain a decision on the use of underspend in the Programme relating to the Schools Block transfers 2022/23 & 2023/24.

2. Recommendation

School's Forum is invited to:

- 2.1 Provide decisions on recommendations set out in points -
 - [4.2.12](#)
 - [4.2.13](#)
 - [4.6.3](#)

3. Background – DSG Programme

3.1 The DSG Programme was launched in June 2023. The DSG Programme includes the oversight and delivery of projects and workstream outlined in the Deficit Management Plan, approved by the Schools Forum in September 2022. An overview of the projects which form the Deficit Management Plan is attached as Appendix a.

3.2 The DSG Programme is part of the wider *Our Families* transformation programme focused on improving the delivery of services across BCC's Children's and Education Directorate.

3.3 The DSG Programme is governed internally by the Our Families Programme Board, with further reporting via Schools Forum, SEND Improvement Board and directly to the Department for Education. A draft governance framework is attached as Appendix b.

3.4 Funding to deliver the DSG Programme is broken down into three elements.

- £1m Department for Education Grant - to deliver DBV in SEND projects and workstreams.
- £928k remaining funding from the School's Block transfer 2022/23 – to deliver Belonging with SEND programme (£793k) and commitments outstanding from the Education Transformation Programme (£135k)
- £1.6m 2023/24 School's Block transfer – to cover programme delivery costs and review of the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) process.

3.5 This report will provide an overview of the progress against each of these three elements in the order outlined above.

4. Progress - DSG Programme

4.1 Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND – Progress since September 2023

4.1.1 **Workstream 1** – BCC has taken a test and learn approach to deliver this workstream focused on strengthening relationships between the school, families, and children.

4.1.1.1 Planning for the delivery phase of Workstream 1 was completed in August 2023 with four schools recruited to take part in the first Test and Learn pilot. The first Pilot focuses on reviewing and co-designing School SEND Information Reports in partnership with parents and carers of children with SEND. Schools were selected using comparison data linked to EHCP applications and the percentage of children in receipt of free school meals (FSM).

4.1.1.2 The Pilot is currently in the delivery phase – which began on the 19 September 2023. BCC is working with the Bristol Parent Carer Forum to develop and support the evaluation of the Pilot. Planning to develop a second and third Test and Learn Pilot is underway. The focus of which will be confirmed in late November, with an expected start date in early January 2024

4.1.2 **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).

4.1.2.1 BCC's Delivery Partners Private Public Ltd., working in collaboration with Social Finance, have now completed the initial analysis phase focusing on how BCC allocates funding known as 'Top up'. This has included interviews with internal and external stakeholders, analysis of SEND funding data, national benchmarking, and best practice.

4.1.2.2 PPL/Social Finance have developed a set of recommendations on how BCC could achieve its objectives of a sustainable use of High Needs Block (HNB) Funding, whilst remaining inclusive and championing early intervention. These recommendations have been designed drawing on research into best practice.

4.1.2.3 PPL/Social Finance are seeking feedback on a set of recommendations during the consultation period which went live on the 1 November 2023 and will close on the 13 December 2023. The consultation includes an online survey, which can be found on BCC's [Ask People](#) page, and a series of virtual and in-person focus groups with council staff, school staff, parents and carers, and young people.

4.1.2.4 For pupils (school age and Post 16) with no EHC plan / in receipt of non-statutory top-up funding, BCC is presenting three options for consultation -

- Retain current statutory funding pre controls/oversight
- Use a proportion of current non-statutory funding for a targeted early intervention and inclusion fund
- Remove non-statutory funding.

4.1.2.5 Following the closure of the consultation, PPL/Social Finance will synthesise findings to inform the final recommendation for a key decision at BCC's Cabinet in the early new year. A report on the findings will also be presented to the Schools Forum in January/February 2024.

4.2 Belonging with SEND (BwS) Programme – Progress since January 2023

4.2.1 The Programme is funded via a school block transfer of £900,000 in the financial year 2022/23.

4.2.2 The BwS Programme aims to support schools financially to turn creative ideas into innovative inclusion practice.

4.2.3 In January 2023, Schools Forum agreed to extend the end date of the programme up to the end of the academic year 2023/24.

4.2.4 Three rounds of grant funding have taken place. Grants were made available in the following three components:

- Component 1 – Grants of up to £100,000 available to groups of schools looking to implement evidence-based interventions which have yet to be tested in Bristol.
- Component 2 – Grants of up to £50,000 available to groups of schools looking to scale up existing evidence informed interventions which have been successful in Bristol.
- Component 3 – Grants of up to £5,000 for individual, or groups of schools looking to develop evidence using a test and learn approach.

4.2.5 29 grants have been approved by a Board consisting of partners internal and external professionals – this includes expertise in early intervention,

educational inclusion, SEND school improvement and educational psychology. The University of Bristol, Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and parents/carers with lived experience of the SEND system in Bristol are also represented on the Board.

4.2.6 In total £457,666 worth of grant funding has been allocated via the BwS programme, this can be broken down per component as follows -

- Component 1 – Two grants totalling £89,222
- Component 2 - Seven grants totalling £292,251
- Component 3 – 20 grants totalling £76,193.

4.2.7 In total, 13 grant applications were rejected as they did not meet the funding criteria.

4.2.8 A summary of each funded project in components 1 and 2 is as follows:

Component	School	Amount	End Date	Summary
1	Woodlands Academy	£55,537	Completed July 2023	Roll out Hamish and Milo wellbeing intervention focusing on emotional literacy for primary aged children in three primary schools (Waycroft, Woodlands, Wicklea) costs include – staffing, equipment, training etc.

1	May Park	£33,685	July 2024	Collaboration with Bristol Family School CiC to implement a psychologically informed intervention to support vulnerable children and their families.
2	North Star Academy	£50,000	December 2023	Coaching, support and mentoring for 6 secondary schools mirroring NS' outreach primary offer
2	Education Psychology – Bristol City Council	£68,200	July 2024	MeLSA training and supervision for 60 LSA/TAs. One whole school MeLSA programme in the academic year 2023/24
2	Cathedral Primary School	£22,401	March 2024	Build a trauma informed and ACE aware culture across primary schools in the CPS Trust
2	City Academy	£47,200	Completed July 2023	Collaboration with Unique Voice to deliver the 'Bossing It' programme to support young people

				with SEND in four CLF schools
2	Cabot Learning Federation	£15,950 (Previous agreement £17k)	March 2024	Transition project focusing on supporting non-CLF primary students transitioning to CLF secondary schools
2	Briarwood Special School	£50,000	July 2024	Specialist support to review and write SEND school improvement plans with 6 Bristol primary schools
2	Cathedral Choir School	£38,500	July 2024	Project to implement the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) '5 a Day for SEND' guidance across CST schools in Bristol.

4.2.9 The following table outlines the name of the school and the size of the grant for component 3.

Recipient	Grant Funding	End Date
Elmfield School for the Deaf	£1,330	31/03/2024
Whitehall Primary	£1,895	31/03/2024
Trust in Learning (TiLA) 1	£2,067	31/03/2024
Barton Hill Academy	£2,226	31/03/2024
Merchants Secondary School	£2,862	31/03/2024

St Anne's Infants	£3,000	Completed
E-ACT	£3,000	30/11/2023
Trust in Learning (TiLA) 2	£3,060	31/03/2024
Summerhill Infants	£3,415	Completed
Willow Park Church of England	£4,182	31/07/2024
St Peter and Paul Primary School	£4,576	Completed
Hareclive E-ACT Academy	£4,820	31/03/2024
Knowle Park Primary School	£5,000	Completed
North Star Academy Trust	£5,000	31/03/2024
Southville Primary	£5,000	Completed
St Bonaventures Primary School	£5,000	30/11/2023
St Werburgh's Primary School	£5,000	31/03/2024
Murmuration Community Therapy	£5,000	31/07/2024
DBAT 1	£4,880	31/07/2024
DBAT 2	£4,880	31/07/2024

4.2.10 Grant recipients are paid in instalments following the successful completion of a monitoring schedule set out in individual grant agreements.

4.2.11 £106,921 was paid out in grant funding in 2022/23. To date £225,203 has been paid in 2023/24, with a further £77,681 planned for the remainder of the financial year.

4.2.12 It is estimated that £51k worth of funding will be required to meet the remaining payment schedules for the period April – July 2024. Therefore, it is asked that the Schools Forum approve a carry forward of £51k to meet these commitments in the new financial year. This amount may increase if there are delays in projects between now and March 2024.

4.2.13 £440k is currently unallocated. It is proposed that this funding is used to cover the start-up costs of an Inclusion Hub, focused on early intervention, for the period of December 2023 and March 2024.

4.2.14 Other options have been explored. Further funding rounds are resource heavy in terms of administration. This is not currently an option. At the School's Forum meeting on 27/09/2022 the Forum agreed that the Programme Manager, working in collaboration with both internal and external inclusion experts could centrally develop inclusion projects and invite schools to take part. The Mediated Learning Support Assistant (MeLSA) offer is a direct result of this approach. Other centrally developed opportunities have been explored, including an Early Language programme in Key Stage 1, but due to resourcing limitations this has not been possible.

4.2.15 The proposed Inclusion Hub would be delivered by BCC's Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) team and initially offered to schools in Bristol for free in 2023/24 using this funding source. The intention is to move towards a more sustainable, contribution-based model from 2024/25 onwards. The intervention, which was co-designed with schools, broken down into 4 tiers:

- Tier 1 – School Based – support to ensure that the school is demonstrating a fully graduated response.
- Tier 2 – Triage and Treat – provision and support to ensure that any extra support is targeted and effective.
- Tier 3 – Turnaround Provision – Short term placements off-site to address specific identified needs.
- Tier 4 – Long term Provision – A more thorough investigation into the needs of a child in an AP setting.

4.3 Remaining DSG Projects

4.4 This section outlines the progress and funding of elements of the DSG programme directly funded by the Schools Block transfer of £1.6m for 2023/24

4.5 EHCP Process Improvement

4.5.1 Reviewing BCC's EHCP process comes under the wider operating model review element of BCC's Our Families Transformation programme. It is not therefore directly part of DSG Programme. Proposed changes will enable BCC to process EHC requests more efficiently and reduce the deficit in the High Needs Block. £600k of funding from the 2023/24 schools block transfer is allocated to the delivery of this project.

4.5.2 Within BCC the demand for EHCPs has been increasing year-on-year. This is putting large amounts of pressure on the SEND service to assess and issue all EHCPs plans within the statutory timeframes.

4.5.3 The service has already made significant improvements to its overall processes through its 'Time for Change' programme. However, the service is still unable to meet the statutory timeframes for assessment and issuing and therefore needs to consider further potential improvements to help manage the high numbers of EHCPs and work towards achieving improved performance within the statutory timeframe.

4.5.4 The service has therefore acquired support from PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) to provide extra capacity to map the end-to-end process and identify potential improvement opportunities.

These opportunities will look to supplement existing improvement and will look to utilise automation to aid officers in their day-to-day tasks.

4.6 Programme Costs

4.6.1 The remaining Schools Block transfer is used to cover the Programme management and costs as follows:

- £496k - Total contributions 2023/24 to the following posts
 - 0.5 FTE Head of Transformation – Our Families
 - SEND Strategic Programme Manager
 - Programme Accountant
 - SEND Inclusion Consultant
 - 0.5 FTE SEND Data Analyst
 - ICT Project Management
- £42k to develop and deliver the Workforce Development programme.
- £50k allocated to fund implementation of SEND funding matrix following the completion of the DBV Top Up Funding Key Decision.

4.6.2 £1.19m - Current commitment of funding from £1.6m in financial year 2023/24

4.6.3 Request that Schools Forum approve the carry forward of any remaining funding into 2024/25 to cover the continued costs associated with programme delivery and management – estimated to be £400k.

5. DSG Management Plan mitigation proposals

1.1. 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 is available in Table below.

Please note the mitigation proposals are iterative and ongoing work is being carried out to review all the schemes shown below in to ensure savings targets are deliverable & on target.

We are awaiting feedback from schools regarding the consultation around 'Non-Statutory Top Up' and we are currently engaging with the DFE and seeking guidance around the details of our savings proposals.

We aim to provide you with a final list of our savings proposals in January 2024 once we have concluded our ongoing due diligence and the points mentioned above.

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	£3,549,873	£4,954,840	£4,954,840	£4,954,840	£4,954,840	£4,954,840
SCHEME B1 Review the effectiveness of rational 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	£1,886,163	£2,167,043	£2,167,043	£2,167,043	£2,167,043
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	£490,242	£492,294	£492,294	£492,294	£492,294	£492,294
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	£1,991,150	£2,282,078	£2,872,999	£2,872,999	£2,872,999	£2,872,999
SCHEME F1 Review post 16 offer to ensure full alignment to DFE/ESFA guidance	£0	£1,198,440	£1,435,735	£1,875,025	£1,875,025	£1,875,025	£1,875,025
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
DEV DEV stretched confidence benefits - annual (Please see DBV Proposals Table 1 for further information)	£0	£1,034,999	£5,227,120	£10,528,030	£14,828,030	£14,828,030	£14,828,030
PLEASE NOTE: The mitigated savings for financial years 2028-29 & 2029-30 are left as 2027-28 and require further due diligence							
Total savings	£2,112,000	£10,900,000	£16,700,000	£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 the appointment of a delivery partner to deliver workstream two proposals.

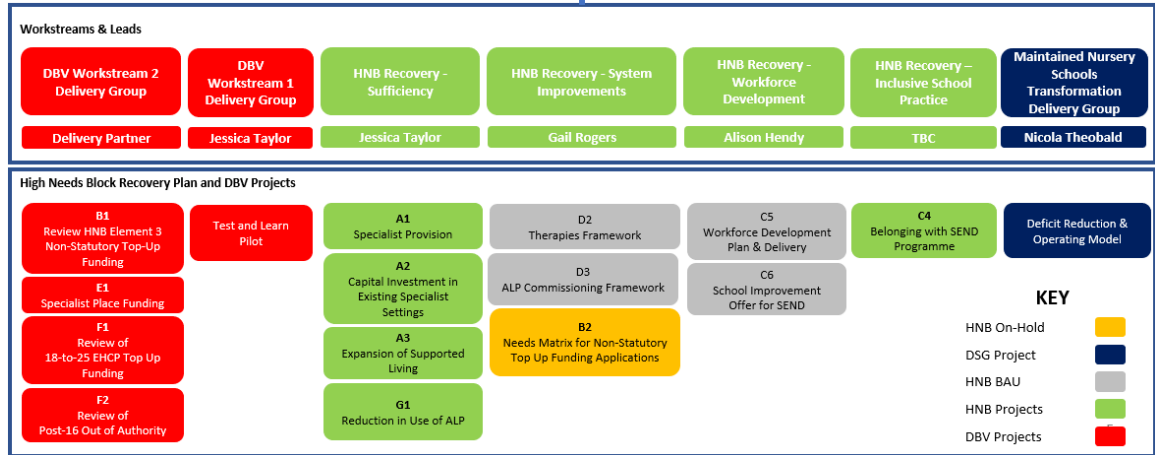
Whilst we continue to work with the DfE to drive the improvements required in outcomes for children with additional and special educational needs and achieve a balance in year position, that can be sustained and demonstrable reduces the deficit, we will need to consider all potential funding sources.

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.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix a



6.2 Appendix b

