

## ***Consultation with Mainstream Primary and Secondary Maintained Schools & Academies***

### ***Transfer of Funding from Schools Block to High Needs Block in 2019-20***

Like all Local Authorities, Buckinghamshire County Council is experiencing pressures in the High Needs Block in response to growing demand for high cost placements. In November 2017, we consulted with schools as part of a broader consultation on the National Funding Formula and Schools Forum agreed to transfer £650k to alleviate these pressures in 2018-19.

The Schools Block will continue to be ring-fenced in 2019-20 but local authorities will retain limited flexibility to transfer up to 0.5% of their Schools Block funding into High Needs, with the approval of Schools Forum. To make such a transfer, local authorities must consult with all maintained schools and academies, and the Schools Forum should take into account the views of the schools responding before giving their response.

The indicative funding allocation for the High Needs Block in 2019-20 is £81.1m. Initial forecasts indicate that there will still be pressures of up to £3.1m against this allocation in 2019-20. These pressures arise from increases in demand for placements to meet complex needs both in the independent sector and in Buckinghamshire special schools. This increase in demand is analysed in the presentation shared with Schools Forum at the September meeting:

<https://democracy.bucksc.gov.uk/documents/s123783/School%20Forum%20presentation%2025%20Sept.pdf>

To manage down demand and reduce dependency on high cost provision, a number of actions were put in place under the umbrella of the Inclusion Hub and the focus of this work was to create capacity in Buckinghamshire to better manage need.

The presentation demonstrates that the proportion of placements in independent provision has reduced; however, costs associated with meeting that need remain high. It is important to note that demand for needs most commonly met in independent provision has increased during the last few years, with an 80% increase in Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). There is not, however, an 80% increase in high cost placements, so although there continues to be a number of young people placed in independent provision, we can see that it is not increasing in parallel with need and this suggests our strategy to meet need in Buckinghamshire is having an impact. In comparison to other areas, where there are recurrent overspends in the high needs block, in Buckinghamshire we have managed to keep our costs down.

We cannot, however, meet an 80% increase in ASD without some ongoing dependency on high cost placements and so we do need to request a transfer from the Schools Block to support this.

The objectives of the SEND Strategy, driven through the work of the Inclusion Hub, will take time to embed as partly it is dependent on a change in practice. We need to support and enable young people to remain in mainstream provision where possible and within our Buckinghamshire special schools. We know that to do this requires a review of the types of needs the special schools currently support to ensure we have sufficient places. We continue to work with our special schools, PRUs and ARPs to develop the right provision.

The indicative Schools Block allocation is £318m for 2019-20. This includes an initial allocation of £1.7m for the growth fund. It is estimated that Buckinghamshire will need to set aside up to £2.5m for growth, an increase of £800k on the estimated DfE allocation.

Recognising the pressures on schools' budgets, the support of schools is sought to enable the financial pressures on High Needs to be met.

Schools are therefore asked in this consultation:

**Question**

***Which of the following amounts do you think should be transferred from the "Schools Block" to "High Needs Block" for 2019-20?***

***The responses available are £0, £0.5m (0.16%), £1.0m (0.31%), and £1.591m (0.5%)***

The consultation runs from 29<sup>th</sup> October to 12<sup>th</sup> November. Please ensure that only one response per school is submitted.

Schools Forum will discuss the consultation responses at their meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and make a final recommendation to Buckinghamshire County Council.