



## Schools Forum agenda

Date: Tuesday 21 March 2023

Time: 1.30 pm

Venue: The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF

### Membership:

Ms J Antrobus (Newton School), Ms S Barcock-Wood (National Education Union), Mrs G Bull (Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School), Ms R Chapman (Chiltern Wood School), Ms J Cochrane (Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School), A Cranmer (Cabinet Member- Buckinghamshire Council), Ms J Divers (Turnfurlong Junior School), Ms S Fahey (Brindley House School), Ms J Freeman (Rye Liaison Group), Mr A Gillespie (Burnham Grammar School), Ms C Glasgow (NASUWT), Mr E Hillyard (Holmer Green Senior School), Ms N Lovegrove (Early Years Representative), Mrs J Male (Alfriston School), Ms J Pearce (Waterside Primary Academy), Mr R Peters (The Misbourne School), Ms J Robertson (Brushwood Junior School), Mrs D Rutley (Aspire PRU), Mr K Shabbir (Cressex Community School), Mr A Sherwell (Thomas Hickman Primary Combined School), Ms F Smalley (The Sandcastle Nursey- Early Years), Ms E Stewart (Stoke Mandeville Combined School), Mr B Taylor (Special School Representative) and Ms J Watson (Lent Rise School)

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<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>1 Election of Chairman &amp; Vice- Chairman</b>	<b>13.30</b>	
<b>2 Apologies for Absence</b>		
<b>3 Declarations of Interest</b> To disclose any Personal or Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.		
<b>4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	<b>13.40</b>	<b>5 - 8</b>
<b>5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022-23</b> To be presented by Ms E Williams, Head of Finance (Children's Services)- Buckinghamshire Council.	<b>13.45</b>	<b>9 - 12</b>
<b>6 Report of the Schools Specific Contingency Panel</b> To be presented by Mrs E Stewart, Chairman of the contingency Panel.	<b>14.15</b>	<b>13 - 24</b>
<b>7 High Needs Budget 2023-24</b> To be presented by Ms E Williams, Head of Finance (Children's Services)- Buckinghamshire Council.	<b>14.45</b>	<b>25 - 30</b>
<b>8 Report of the DSG Expenditure Review Group</b> To be presented by Ms E Williams, Head of Finance (Children's Services)- Buckinghamshire Council.	<b>15.15</b>	<b>31 - 40</b>
<b>9 AOB</b>	<b>15.45</b>	
<b>10 Date of Next Meeting</b> Tuesday 27 June 2023- 1.30pm The Oculus, The Gateway, Aylesbury.	<b>16.00</b>	

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

For further information please contact: Christina Beevers  
[democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) 01296 382938



## Schools Forum minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on Tuesday 17 January 2023 in Via MS Teams - Virtual, commencing at 1.45 pm and concluding at 3.10 pm.

### Members present

Ms J Antrobus, Mrs G Bull, Ms R Chapman, Ms J Freeman, Mr A Gillespie, Ms C Glasgow, Mr E Hillyard, Ms N Lovegrove, Mrs J Male, Mr R Peters, Ms J Robertson, Mrs D Rutley, Mr K Shabbir, Mr A Sherwell, Ms F Smalley, Mrs E Stewart, Mr B Taylor, Ms S Bayliss, Ms C Beevers, Mr J Carter, Mr G Drawmer and Ms E Williams.

### Agenda Item

#### 1 Election of Chairman

Mr G Drawmer opened the meeting and advised the forum was still without a Chairman, he handed over to Ms Beevers to advise of the process.

The four nominations for Chairman received were for:

Ms J Cochrane  
 Ms G Bull  
 Ms J Freeman  
 Mr A Gillespie

Ms C Beevers advised as 2 of the 4 nominees had sent apologies for the meeting that it had been agreed that a conversation would take place offline to decide on a Chairman. Ms G Bull agreed to Chair the meeting in absence of a permanent Chairman.

Action	Deadline	To Be Actioned By
To send out an email to the 4 nominees to decide on a Schools Forum Chairman.	ASAP	Ms C Beevers

## 2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

Cllr A Cranmer- Buckinghamshire Council  
Mr S James- Buckinghamshire Council  
Ms J Cochrane- Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School  
Ms J Pearce- Waterside Primary Academy  
Ms S Barcock-Wood- National Education Union  
Mrs J Freeman – King’s Wood School

## 3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 06 December 2022 were **AGREED** as an accurate record.

The actions from the meeting held on 06 December 2022 were reviewed and **AGREED** as completed or carried forward.

Action	Deadline	To be Completed By
Amend typos as agreed.	ASAP	Ms C Beevers

## 5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022-23

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance (Children’s Services)- Buckinghamshire Council gave an overview of the report provided.

### Recommendations:

Schools Forum is asked to note the revenue budget monitoring forecast at the end of December 2022 (Period 9).

### Resolved:

Schools Forum **NOTED** the revenue budget monitoring forecast at the end of December 2022 (Period 9).

## 6 School Budget Proposals 2023-24

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance (Children’s Services)- Buckinghamshire Council gave an overview of the report provided.

### DSG Allocation 2023-24

#### Recommendations:

- a) To recommend that Buckinghamshire Council sets the overall Dedicated Schools Budget at £579.4m in line with the funding allocation announced on 16th December 2022.

- b) To recommend that the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant announced by the Department for Education (DfE) are allocated to the School's Budget in accordance with the conditions of grant (final school level allocations to be confirmed in spring 2023).

**Resolved:**

- a) Schools Forum **RECOMMENDED** that Buckinghamshire Council sets the overall Dedicated Schools Budget at £579.4m in line with the funding allocation announced on 16th December 2022.
- b) Schools Forum **RECOMMENDED** that the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant announced by the Department for Education (DfE) are allocated to the School's Budget in accordance with the conditions of grant (final school level allocations to be confirmed in spring 2023).

**Section A**

**Recommendations:**

- a) To agree the allocation of funding to mainstream schools based on the local funding formula for schools agreed in December 2022, updated for the October 2022 census data.
- b) To agree that the cost of the Minimum Funding Guarantee should be funded through the capping of gains.
- c) To confirm the criteria for the Growth Fund in 2023-24.

**Resolved:**

- a) Schools Forum **AGREED** the allocation of funding to mainstream schools based on the local funding formula for schools agreed in December 2022, updated for the October 2022 census data.
- b) Schools Forum **AGREED** that the cost of the Minimum Funding Guarantee should be funded through the capping of gains.
- c) Schools Forum **CONFIRMED** the criteria for the Growth Fund in 2023-24.

**Section B**

**Recommendations:**

- a) To agree the Central Schools Service Block budgets for 2023-24 as detailed in Appendix 5.

**Resolved:**

- a) Schools Forum **AGREED** the Central Schools Service Block budgets for 2023-24 as detailed in Appendix 5.

## **Section C**

### **Recommendations:**

- a) To agree the budget for the High Needs Block in 2023-24 to be set at £123.5m and that further discussions to consider the potential shortfall in the high needs budget are held with the DSG Expenditure Review Group prior to the next Schools Forum meeting.

### **Resolved:**

- a) Schools Forum **AGREED** the budget for the High Needs Block in 2023-24 to be set at £123.5m and that further discussions to consider the potential shortfall in the high needs budget are held with the DSG Expenditure Review Group prior to the next Schools Forum meeting.

## **Section D**

### **Recommendations:**

- a) To agree the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) for 2023-24 as detailed in Option 4 in Appendix 6 of the report.

### **Resolved:**

- a) Schools Forum **AGREED** the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) for 2023-24 as detailed in Option 4 in Appendix 6 of the report.

## **7 AOB**

There were no items of AOB.

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 21 March 2023- 1.30pm

The Oculus, The Gateway, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 8FF



## Report to Schools Forum

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023

**Title:** Dedicated Schools Budget – Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022-23

**Author:** Liz Williams, Head of Finance, Children’s Services

**Recommendations:**

**Schools Forum is asked to note the revenue budget monitoring forecast at the end of January 2023 (Period 10)**

**Reason for decision:** For Information

### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. This report updates Schools Forum on the current forecast for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget for the 2022-23 financial year, based on the spend to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023 (period 10).

### 2. Forecast 2022-23

2.1. The overall Dedicated Schools Budget is currently projected to overspend by £0.29m as at the end of January, an adverse movement of £0.57m compared with the previous report to Schools Forum.

	Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Forecast Variance £'000	%
Central Block	5,054	5,185	131	3%
Early Years Block	34,579	33,286	-1,292	-4%
High Needs Block	104,062	105,508	1,446	1%
Schools Block	174,797	174,797	0	0%
	<b>318,492</b>	<b>318,776</b>	<b>284</b>	
Funding Block	-318,492	-318,776	-284	0%
<b>Education - DSG Total</b>	<b>-0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

1.1. The early years block is projected to underspend by £1.3m mainly due to reduced take up of places for 3 and 4 year olds. The reduced take up reflects children taking less hours and changes in working patterns of parents post Covid. Take up of places

by vulnerable 2 year olds, however, has increased from 62% to 92%. It is likely that a proportion of this underspend will be clawed back by the DfE during the 2023-24 financial year. The amount clawed back will be determined by the numbers of children taking up places as at the January pupil census date

- 1.2. A summary of the current forecast against the high needs block is attached as an appendix to this report. High needs budgets are forecast to overspend by £1.4m, an increase of £0.6m compared with the previous report.
- 2.2. The forecast takes into account the unallocated contingency of £1.7m and includes pressures against the budgets for both independent and Buckinghamshire maintained and academy special schools, personal budgets and mainstream top ups, alternative provision and integrated therapies.
- 2.3. Schools block is currently projected to break even.
- 2.4. Central schools services block is projected to overspend by £0.13m due to pressures against the budget for Premature Retirement Costs as costs continue to exceed the available budget. There are also small overspends against the Admissions Team and the budget for copyright licences.

### 3. DSG Reserve

- 3.1. Any variance against the DSG is to be managed through the DSG reserve which is ringfenced.
- 3.2. The DSG deficit at the start of the 2022-23 financial year is £3.57m, the current forecast would cause the deficit to increase to £3.85m. Other adjustments to the DSG reserve including the drawdown of Growth Fund to fund pupils in new and expending schools, and a positive DfE adjustment to the Early Years block for 2021-22, result in a forecast deficit of **£4.12m** at the end of the current financial year.



**High Needs Block - Revenue Budget Monitoring Period 10****Appendix 1**

<b>Expenditure Type</b>	<b>2022-23 budget £'000</b>		<b>Period 10 Forecast £'000</b>	<b>Forecast Variance £'000</b>
<b>Placements/Top-ups 5-16 year olds</b>				
Independent Special Schools	15,747		16,247	500
Other LA Special Schools (net)	4,686		4,190	-496
BC Special Schools	35,515		36,629	1,114
ARPs	3,849		3,556	-293
Mainstream Top-Ups with EHCP	13,600		14,873	1,273
<b>Total Placement/Top-ups in Schools (5-16 year olds)</b>	<b>73,397</b>		<b>75,494</b>	<b>2,097</b>
<b>Post-16 Placements</b>				
Post-16 (Independent and FE College)	12,056		11,995	-62
<b>Early Years Top-Ups</b>				
Early Years pupils with EHCPs	845		683	-162
<b>Total support for pupils with EHCPs (places and top ups)</b>	<b>86,298</b>		<b>88,172</b>	<b>1,874</b>
SEN Support/Pupils without plans - Early Years	173		364	191
Early Years Inclusion Funding	400		400	-
SEN Support/ Pupils without plans	474		468	6
<b>Total top ups for pupils without EHCPs</b>	<b>1,046</b>		<b>1,232</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>Total Spend on Places and Top-ups for Pupils</b>	<b>87,345</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>89,404</b>	<b>2,059</b>
<b>Alternative Provision</b>				
Pupil Referral Units	2,533		2,440	-92
Alternative Provision	1,396		2,230	834
Hospital Tuition Service	237		237	0
Home Tuition Service	218		196	-22
<b>Total Alternative Provision - spend on Pupils</b>	<b>4,383</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5,103</b>	<b>720</b>
<b>Commissioned Contracts</b>				
Integrated Therapies	2,207		2,728	521
<b>Total Commissioned Contracts</b>	<b>2,207</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2,728</b>	<b>521</b>
<b>Other support for pupils and schools</b>				
<b>Total Contribution Other support (including contingency)</b>	<b>10,127</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8,273</b>	<b>-1,854</b>
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>104,062</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>105,508</b>	<b>1,446</b>

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## Report to Schools Forum

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023

**Title:** Report from the Schools Specific Contingency Panel

**Author:** Liz Williams, Head of Finance (Children's Services)

**Recommendations:**

**Schools Forum is asked to:**

- 1. Note the outcomes of the Schools Specific Contingency Panel meeting.**
- 2. Agree the proposal to hold a further meeting in May 2023 to consider claims for exceptional energy costs.**
- 3. Agree the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for the Schools Specific Contingency Fund for the 2023-24 financial year.**

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This report updates members of Schools Form on the decisions of the Schools Specific Contingency Panel at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 for the financial year 2022-23.

### 2. Contingency Fund Applications

- 2.1. The budget for 2022-23 is £437,839 based on balances rolled forward from previous years. There was no de-delegation from schools in 2022-23.
- 2.2. The group considered applications from 13 schools totalling £421,974. Having considered the evidence presented by schools the panel agreed payments of £103,906. There is one claim where further evidence is required and this has been deferred to a future meeting (proposed in May – see section 3). All schools have been notified of the outcome of their requests. No appeal requests have been received to date and Schools Forum will be updated of the outcome of any appeals in due course.

2.3. Appendix 1 shows details of anonymised applications and payments agreed for this financial year.

2.4. Similar to previous years, successful bids included unforeseen staffing costs, pupil premium for traveller children and costs associated with additional pupils up to a maximum of 7/12 AWPU. Unsuccessful applications were those in which the case was not made according to the Terms of Reference.

### 3. Claims for Energy Costs

3.1. Schools Forum had previously agreed an amendment to the Terms of Reference for the contingency fund to enable claims for energy costs to be considered if schools are projecting an overall deficit for the financial year and were able to demonstrate that high energy costs had contributed to that deficit.

3.2. 3 schools submitted a claim for assistance with energy costs and 1 school highlighted energy costs as a contributory factor in its forecast deficit but did not include energy costs within the claim.

3.3. As schools have not received energy charges for the second half of the financial year in many cases it was not possible for claims to be sufficiently evidenced and therefore the panel was not able to consider those claims at the February meeting. Panel members did recognise, however, that this has been a significant cost driver impacting on the financial position for schools.

3.4. It is proposed that a further meeting of the panel be held in May 2023 to consider claims for the impact of energy costs in 2022-23. Schools will need to have closed the 2022/23 financial year with an overall deficit and must demonstrate that energy costs were a significant contributor to this.

3.5. Draft terms of reference for this meeting are included as Appendix 2 to this report.

3.6. As there is to be no further de-delegation from schools for the contingency funding in 2023-24 the panel was mindful that an amount needs to be retained in the fund for the 2023-24 financial year.

3.7. It is proposed that the minimum amount to be rolled forward for 2023-24 contingency claims should be £250,000 therefore the maximum amount to be available for the energy claims process will be £78,000 should the other unresolved claim be successful. Claims will be paid out at a maximum of 50% of the amount claimed however if the eligible claims exceed the amount available the amounts are to be scaled down.

#### 4. Schools Specific Contingency Fund Terms of Reference

4.1. The Panel agreed that the terms of reference for the contingency fund should be reviewed to include

- a) Support for energy costs are to be removed from the terms of reference for 2023-24 as high energy costs will no longer be considered as unforeseen costs.
- b) References to Covid-19 expenditure to be removed from the terms of reference.
- c) Section Costs for long term absence of non teaching staff if they are key roles that the school cannot cover internally.

4.2. Appendix 3 to this report shows the proposed updated terms of reference.

## Appendix 1

<b>Table 1: Contingency Decisions 2022-23</b>		
<b>Contingency bids for Financial Year 2022-23</b>		
<b>Anonymised list of 13 schools</b>		
	<b>Requested</b>	<b>Agreed 28/02/2023</b>
1	£33,893	£16,947
2	£77,692	£7,500
3	£26,464	£5,084
4	£22,387	£0
5	£29,120	£0
6	£42,705	£12,905
7	£54,466	£24,005
8	£46,300	£0
9	£4,104	£2,052
10	£60,313	£25,628
11	£2,770	£1,616
12	£13,396	£6,360
13	£8,365	£1,809
	<b>£421,974</b>	<b>£103,906</b>
	Budget 2022-23	£437,839
	C/f from 2021-22	£0
	<b>Total Available</b>	<b>£437,839</b>
	Balance for Unresolved Claims and Appeals and to carry forward to 2023-24	£333,933

## Schools Specific Contingency Panel

### Meeting to Consider Claims for Support with Energy Costs

#### Terms of Reference

1. A one off meeting to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to consider claims to the Schools Specific Contingency Fund for support with energy costs from the 2022-23 financial year.
2. Note that from 2023-24 it is not expected that energy costs will meet the criteria for contingency funding as high energy costs will need to have been budgeted for and therefore cannot be considered as unforeseen.
3. The purpose of the meeting is to consider claims from schools meeting the criteria for retrospective contingency support for energy costs incurred in the 2022-23 financial year.
4. To be considered eligible for funding schools must:
  - a. Have an overall deficit balance at the end of 2022-23 financial year  
and
  - b. Be able to demonstrate that energy costs have been a significant contributor to that deficit position.
5. Schools will need to demonstrate that increased energy costs were taken into account in the setting of the 2022-23 budget and may need to provide additional evidence to support their claim at the request of the panel.
6. Eligible claims will be funded at a maximum of 50% of the amount claimed. If the total eligible claims exceed the amount of contingency funding available then the amounts to be paid will be scaled down accordingly.
7. There will be no appeals process in relation to the decisions from this panel

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## SCHOOL SPECIFIC CONTINGENCY FUND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Approved by Schools Forum: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Effective: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

### Background

The Schools Budget consists of the delegated budgets allocated to individual schools and a budget for other provision for pupils which local authorities fund centrally. The allocation to each school is made according to formulae, either set nationally or agreed on a local basis.

In Buckinghamshire, a contingency fund has been established, in accordance with current regulations<sup>1</sup>, to assist maintained schools where, for a range of potential reasons they are experiencing financial difficulty to a degree likely to impact adversely on the education of pupils. This fund is known as the Schools Specific Contingency Fund (SSCF). The SSCF is a de-delegated service. Funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the formula but can be passed back, or 'de-delegated', for maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools with Schools Forum approval. De-delegation is not an option for Special schools, Nursery schools and PRUs. Primary and secondary maintained school members of the Schools Forum can vote to approve a local authority proposal to pool funding from maintained school budgets.

Any unspent balance at the year-end should be reported to Schools Forum. Funding may be carried forward to the following year and can be used specifically for de-delegated service if the authority wishes. If a local authority carries forward an overspend, then the Schools Forum must specifically agree for it to be funded from the following year's budget.

The SSCF is central expenditure deducted for the purpose of ensuring that monies are available to enable increases in a school's budget share after it has been allocated where it subsequently becomes apparent that a governing body have incurred expenditure which it would be unreasonable to expect them to meet from the school's budget share which may include expenditure in relation to -

- (i) schools in financial difficulty,
- (ii) the writing-off of deficits of schools which are discontinued, excluding any additional costs and overheads,
- (iii) new, amalgamating or closing schools, or
- (iv) other expenditure where such circumstances were unforeseen when initially determining the school's budget share

Regulations<sup>1</sup> give the Schools Forum members for Primary maintained schools and Secondary maintained schools the power to agree the level of the Schools Specific Contingency.

### The Schools Specific Contingency Group (SSCG)

The Schools Specific Contingency Group has delegated authority from the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Schools Forum to make allocations of funding to schools from the Schools Specific Contingency Fund.

# SCHOOL SPECIFIC CONTINGENCY FUND

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

Approved by Schools Forum: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Effective: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

### Membership of the group shall include:

Head of Finance Children's Services or representative

And

At least three maintained school Members of the Schools Forum

The group has the authority to determine appropriate criteria for the allocation of contingency funding to schools; such criteria may need to change from time to time to reflect available funding and the number and nature of applications from schools.

The SSCG will meet once a year, in late February/March, when all cases submitted by schools will be considered. Meetings will be chaired by a Schools Forum member.

In order to avoid any conflict of interest that might exist for a member of the Group in the consideration of a specific application with which he/she may have a connection as a Governor, IEB member, Headteacher or Business Manager, then such a conflict will be eliminated by such a member withdrawing from the discussions and decision making surrounding the case.

### Principles and criteria

Schools are expected to take all reasonable issues into account when setting their financial plans and to ensure that they have capacity within their plans to deal with unforeseen eventualities. The Schools Specific Contingency Fund is necessarily very limited and is therefore allocated only in exceptional circumstances.

In considering applications for support except those relating to errors in budget shares, in all cases the school is required to demonstrate that "financial difficulty"\* would result. The SSCG will require evidence of the size and nature of the expenditure together with an explanation of steps taken to mitigate the impact on the school's budget. The group will take account of such steps and in cases where the expenditure could have been avoided or substantially reduced (e.g. through the purchase of appropriate insurance) applications will be discounted accordingly.

\* Financial difficulties shall be recognised when either

- a) The latest forecast of the year end results show a deficit or
- b) As a result of the additional costs (being the subject of the Contingency application), the in-year deficit of the school exceeds 2% of the school's Budget share

Applications will be considered for the issues arising in the academic years covered by the current financial year. However, funding is only available on a financial year basis and therefore schools should ensure that applications are made within the correct financial year. **Consideration of applications will be limited by the level of the budget set aside for the SSCF.**

Where allocations are agreed, the following criteria will generally be applied;

# SCHOOL SPECIFIC CONTINGENCY FUND

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

Approved by Schools Forum: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Effective: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

- (i) Support for significant unforeseen costs incurred up to the date of the SSCG meeting – no more than 50% of the cost accepted by the SSCG. (NB schools may apply for support to meet costs incurred in the remainder of the financial year after the date of the SSCG meeting in the following year if the school still meets the overall criteria for financial difficulty)

The following are examples of applications falling under point (i) above – unforeseen costs – which the SSCG may consider:-

- a) Long term absence of teaching staff through sickness/maternity leave etc. where it has proved necessary to engage agency staff. This may include HLTA absence if that absence requires cover to be provided by a supply teacher. (N.B. the SSCG will require valid reasons if no insurance has been arranged either for teachers or for HLTA staff if they are being deployed in a teaching role)
  - b) Long term absence of key non-teaching staff where the role cannot be covered internally (for example caretaking staff).
  - c) Net redundancy costs<sup>2</sup> for staff declared redundant in the first 9 months of the financial year. Redundancies arising in the last 3 months of the financial year will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
  - d) Child Protection issues resulting in staff suspensions and/or legal costs.
  - e) Significant and unbudgeted increases in energy costs (for 2022-23 financial year only). SSCG will require evidence that the school is forecast to be in deficit at the end of the financial year and that the school has taken steps in year to mitigate the impact of these costs, including reducing expenditure elsewhere.
- (ii) Support for additional pupil numbers
- In cases where schools experience or need to plan for, a known (not forecasted) significant rise in pupil numbers since the date of the previous funding census (October) until the start of the financial year when those pupils begin to be funded through the funding model, they may apply for additional funding to cover costs incurred in providing education to those pupils. Each case will be considered on an individual spend or need to spend basis.

Schools need to demonstrate:

- a) That necessary additional staffing costs have been incurred or need to be incurred,
- b) That financial difficulty will arise without additional funding i.e. that insufficient free reserve and balances are available to cover those costs. "Free reserves refer to such reserves held by a school which are not specifically held for some future defined expenditure."
- c) Marginal non-staffing costs will be expected to be met by the schools themselves, but significant non-staffing costs will be considered provided that there is clear evidence to prove the cost would not have been incurred if the pupil numbers had not risen.

Contingency panel will grant the actual amount that the school can justify it has incurred due to the increase in pupils up to a maximum of 7/12 AWPU

# SCHOOL SPECIFIC CONTINGENCY FUND

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

Approved by Schools Forum: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Effective: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

### (iii) Traveller Children

For Traveller children who do not receive pupil premium an amount equal to Pupil Premium shall be paid for the period at which the child is registered at that school. Claims should be made in arrears.

Applications which fall outside the scope of the Contingency Fund which will not be accepted and for clarity include those:-

- (i) for funding appertaining to prior financial years
- (ii) for capital expenditure
- (iii) from academies
- (iv) for circumstances which fall under the criteria of the growth fund, i.e. pupil growth beyond PAN to meet basic need
- (v) for SEN funding
- (vi)

## Application Process

Schools that believe their budget share is incorrect should contact the Schools Funding and Support Team to verify the calculations. Any errors established will be corrected as a matter of course and will be reported to the SSCG.

Additional information or evidence may be included in covering letters etc. to support the school's application.

The application must be supported by an up-to-date forecast of the school's projected year end income & expenditure and resulting surplus/deficit (such forecasts to be provided by utilising the standard financial reporting process), Updated for 4 weeks before the panel meeting. The date of the meeting will be announced on the SchoolsWeb.

## Notification of Decisions

The BC Finance team will notify Schools of the decision on their contingency applications within 15 working days of the SSCG meeting.

## Appeals

Schools wishing to appeal against the decision made on their application should put the details of their appeal in writing enclosing all additional and supporting information within 5 working days of the decision and submit using the Schools Contingency Fund Request Form on the Service Desk Portal. Any appeals will be heard and considered by the SSCG at a special meeting.

(Amended by Schools Forum 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022)

# **SCHOOL SPECIFIC CONTINGENCY FUND**

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Approved by Schools Forum: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Effective: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

Note <sup>1</sup>: THE SCHOOL AND EARLY YEARS FINANCE (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2021

Note <sup>2</sup>: Net redundancy costs to be calculated as the costs of the redundancy less the amount 'saved' in salaries, including on-costs, for the balance of the financial year. (Schools should be aware however that the SSCF would only cover up to 50% of the net redundancy costs)

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## Report to Schools Forum

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023

**Title:** Proposed High Needs Budget 2023-24

**Author:** Liz Williams, Head of Finance – Children’s Services

### **Recommendations:**

#### **To agree the updated budget for the High Needs Block in 2023-24**

##### **1. High Needs Block 2023-24**

- 1.1. The allocation for the High Needs Block in 2023-24 is £123.5, an increase of £11.5m compared to 2022-23.
- 1.2. The funding settlement includes an additional allocation of £5.059m. Local authorities are required to pass on a 3.4% funding increase to maintained special and alternative provision (AP) schools, and special and AP academies (including free schools), based on the number of places being funded in 2022 to 2023. Local authorities must separately identify these allocations for the schools and pay them directly to the school, or in the case of academies and free schools to the academy trust. The payments must be made in full during the financial year 2023 to 2024. This indicates that the payment of additional grant is outside of the banded top up values and is applied both to place and top up funding. The estimated cost of this increase is £1.6m.

##### **2. Proposed Budget**

- 2.1. In determining the high needs block budget for 2023-24 the following pressures and opportunities have been taken into account:
  - a) Full year effect of pressures in 2022-23
  - b) Projected increases in demand in 2023-24, including planned increases in places arising from the Sufficiency Strategy
  - c) Required increase to special school and PRU budgets
  - d) Consideration of an inflation uplift to top up values
  - e) Increases to contract costs for Integrated Therapies

2.2. All of these pressures have now been reviewed. Contractual commitments have been reflected in the proposed budgets in addition to the required increase to special school and PRU funding (3.4%). The affordability of increases to top up values and inflationary uplifts has also been considered.

2.3. Potential mitigations arising from actions already taken in the DSG Management Plan have been calculated. Assumptions are based on the impact of actions on numbers of EHCPs and the potential mitigation of demand for external placements. These assumptions have been built into the proposed budget and will be monitored through the financial year.

2.4. The estimated cost pressures and mitigations are summarised in the following table.

	£'000	£'000
High Needs Budget 2022-23 (Gross of deductions for Academies and FE Colleges)		112,061
<i>Items for Consideration 2023-24</i>		
Full Year Effect of 2022-23 demand	2,412	
Sufficiency Strategy - Planned increase in Capacity	1,521	
Additional Demand September 2023	5,056	
Fee Increases (external placements)	837	
3.4% increase - Special Schools and PRUs	1,631	
Increased Therapy Costs	1,040	
New commitments - Independent Travel Training and Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	367	
Increase in Top Up Rates/Band values (assumed at 3%)	1,396	
<b>Total Increased Pressures</b>		<b>14,259</b>
<b>Unmitigated Budget Requirement</b>		<b>126,319</b>
Potential Mitigation from DSG Management Plan actions		(2,778)
<b>Total Budget Requirement 2023-24 after mitigations</b>		<b>123,542</b>
High Needs Block 2023-24		(123,542)
<b>Shortfall</b>		<b>(0)</b>

2.5. A detailed breakdown of the proposed budget is provided in Appendix 1 to this report.

### 3. Risks and Mitigations 2023-24

3.1. The following risks and mitigations will need to be monitored throughout the year:



<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Inflationary increases for external placements exceed the budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests are monitored and challenged by the commissioning team and challenged where they cannot be evidenced</li> </ul>
Demand for external placements exceeds the estimate used to calculate the budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased numbers of places within Buckinghamshire special schools and ARPs have been budgeted for, increasing capacity to meet need within Buckinghamshire schools</li> <li>• Continued focus on reviewing high cost placements</li> <li>• Rigorous process within SEND Placement Panel to ensure robust placement decision making</li> </ul>
Mitigating savings are based on assumptions not yet tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring of activity and impact of each mitigation will be monitored and reviewed in year</li> </ul>
Demand for EHCPs increases beyond current projections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand projections based on trends from previous years and projected population growth etc</li> <li>• Increased capacity within Area Teams from April 2023</li> </ul>

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**High Needs Block -Draft Budget 2023-24****Appendix 1**

<b>Expenditure Type</b>	<b>2022-23 budget (gross of deductions) £'000</b>		<b>Proposed Budget 2023- 24 £'000</b>	<b>Budget Change £'000</b>
<b>Placements/Top-ups 5-16 year olds</b>				
Independent Special Schools	15,747		16,631	884
Other LA Special Schools (net)	4,686		4,686	0
BC Special Schools	39,096		43,909	4,813
ARPs	4,574		4,900	326
Mainstream Top-Ups for pupils with EHCP	13,280		16,732	3,452
Education Personal Budgets	686		1,108	422
<b>Total Placement/Top-ups in Schools (5-16 year olds)</b>	<b>78,069</b>		<b>87,967</b>	<b>9,897</b>
<b>Post-16 Placements</b>				
Post-16 (Independent and FE College)	13,462		13,931	469
<b>Early Years Top-Ups</b>				
Early Years pupils with EHCPs	845		592	-253
<b>Total support for pupils with EHCPs (places and top ups)</b>	<b>92,377</b>		<b>102,490</b>	<b>10,114</b>
SEN Support/Pupils without plans - Early Years	173		178	5
Early Years Inclusion Funding	400		400	-
SEN Support/ Pupils without plans	474		488	14
<b>Total top ups for pupils without EHCPs</b>	<b>1,046</b>		<b>1,066</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Total Spend on Places and Top-ups for Pupils</b>	<b>93,423</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>103,556</b>	<b>10,133</b>
<b>Alternative Provision</b>				
Pupil Referral Units	4,453		4,640	187
Alternative Provision	1,396		1,996	600
Hospital Tuition Service	237		265	28
Home Tuition Service	218		241	24
<b>Total Alternative Provision - spend on Pupils</b>	<b>6,303</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7,141</b>	<b>838</b>
<b>Commissioned Contracts</b>				
Integrated Therapies	2,207		3,926	1,719
<b>Total Commissioned Contracts</b>	<b>2,207</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3,926</b>	<b>1,719</b>
<b>Other support for pupils and schools</b>				
Specialist Teaching and support for pupils	2,883		2,987	104
Support for Vulnerable Pupils	871		871	0
Educational Equipment	300		300	0
Portage	280		310	30
Reintegration	413		413	0
Support for the Education of Looked After Children	742		977	235
Unallocated High Needs Contingency	1,756		132	-1,624
Teachers Pay and Pension Grants and other central costs	2,883		2,929	46
<b>Total Contribution Other support (including contingency)</b>	<b>10,127</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8,918</b>	<b>-1,209</b>
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>112,061</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>123,542</b>	<b>11,481</b>

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## Report to Schools Forum

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023

**Title:** Report of the DSG Expenditure Review Group

**Author:** Liz Williams, Head of Finance – Children’s Services

### Recommendations:

- a) To note the update on the work of the DSG Expenditure Review Group
- b) To note the information on the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Programme.

### 1. Background

1.1. The DSG Expenditure Review Group met on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 to consider the following agenda items:

#### ***Membership of the group***

1.2. Due to a number of head teachers withdrawing from the group, due to retirement or other reasons, it will be necessary to seek additional representation on the group, this will be explored with the primary and secondary executive groups.

#### ***High Needs Budget 2023-24***

1.3. The group discussed the draft high needs budget for 2023-24. The draft budget is included as a separate report on this agenda.

1.4. The main focus of discussion included the assumptions behind the demand and sufficiency pressures and the rationale for proposed savings.

#### ***Early Years Inclusion Fund***

1.5. The group considered a report on the impact of the Early Years Inclusion Fund in the current year. Investment in the fund is £400,000 in the current year and the proposal was agreed following a recommendation from this group prior to the start of the 2022-23 financial year. Based on the outcome of the initial review the high needs budget for 2023-24 includes a continuation of the fund.

- 1.6. The fund is intended to develop practice and support the implementation of approaches to improve outcomes for the child as well as to support successful transition from early years education into primary level. Monies from the Reception Inclusion Fund are a contribution towards the cost of delivering specific, evidence-led interventions and/or provision identified to support a child's emerging need. It should enable individual children or groups of children to achieve identified outcomes. The Reception Inclusion Fund should also be used in conjunction with any other funding received by the setting.
- 1.7. The initial analysis from the first round of payments show that the funding was positively received and was used purposefully as intended by this work. The analysis also shows that settings consider that the funding has not only supported the children that were the intended recipients of support but that there have been setting wide impacts. As only the first round of payment could be analysed further time is needed to complete a full cycle and to understand the impacts for children as they transition into school and a further years funding will be necessary to gain a full understanding.

### ***Delivering Better Value in SEND***

- 1.8. The group received an update on the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme. Further detail is provided for Schools Forum in this report.

## **2. The Delivering Better Value Programme**

- 2.1. On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 the DfE launched the new Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV) programme, which will be delivered in partnership with Newton Europe Limited and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
- 2.2. The programme will support 55 local authorities (LAs) with substantial deficits to manage their high needs systems, so they provide effective and sustainable SEND services that achieve good outcomes for their children and young people. A Sector Steering Group will jointly oversee this programme ensuring learning is shared more widely with the sector, building further on the research and guidance publications.
- 2.3. The programme builds on research published by the DfE on [effective management of high needs systems in local authorities](#) which makes 10 recommendations relating to capacity, partnership culture and developing local provision.
- 2.4. Buckinghamshire is in Tranche 3 of the DBV Programme and will be engaging with CIPFA and Newton Europe Limited in the summer of 2023.

## **3. Objectives of the Programme**

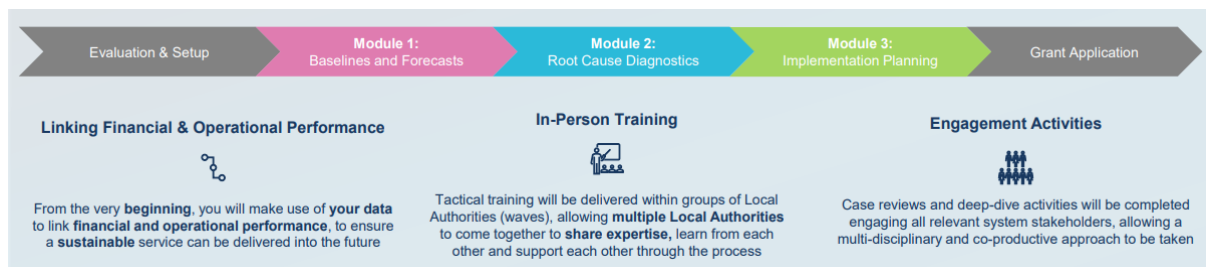
- 3.1. Delivering Better Value (DBV) is a programme working to identify and implement local and national opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- 3.2. There are two main approaches within the programme:

- i. **Short term help:** To identify sustainable changes in each LA that can drive high quality outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and to support you in building an evidence-based grant application to assist the implementation of those changes
- ii. **Informing long term reform:** Build an objective evidence base across a third of the sector, which can be used to:
  - Inform future policy and reform
  - Build a national playbook & share best practice
  - Inform future national programmes of similar scale and intent

3.3. At the end of the first phase the council will be able use the outputs from the diagnostic phase to support a grant application for up to £1m to support the implementation of the high needs management plan.

#### 4. DBV Diagnostic

4.1. In order to deliver the first of those approaches, short term help to identify sustainable changes, a DBV Diagnostic exercise will be carried out in conjunction with CIPFA and Newton Europe Limited. The diagnostic is delivered through a modular approach, incorporating training, data analysis and engagement activities. This is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach – support is tailored to each Local Authority, within this framework, to ensure everyone receives the best outcome. A summary of the approach is as follows:



4.2. DBV Diagnostic support is (extract from DBV Introductory slide pack):

- A participative process
- Collating evidence on best practice in the sector and shared, thematic challenges
- Build a grant application for investment to support Phase 2 (Implementation)

4.3. DBV Diagnostic Support is designed to help councils plan for (extract from DBV Introductory slide pack):

- Designing, with frontline staff and CYP/parent/carer networks, the solutions to the biggest problems

- Measuring the impact and iterating in a safe environment
- Adapting the solutions to the needs of individuals, teams or localities
- Creating the assurance and governance mechanisms to assure local adaptations
- Supporting all the relevant staff across the system to work in the new way on an ongoing basis as business-as-usual

4.4. Further detail on the diagnostic phase is shown in Appendix 1 – this is an extract from a detailed slide pack provided to local authorities and draws out the key elements of the work and the engagement at each stage.

## 5. Buckinghamshire Context and Next Steps

- 5.1. The Buckinghamshire DSG Recovery Plan is in line with the 10 priorities highlighted by the DfE research and the [local authority guidance](#) on sustainable high needs systems. As part of the work of the DSG Spending Review Group we have interrogated activity and spend data on pupils with EHCPs and SEN Support. Pupil projections have also been developed to drive the SEND Sufficiency Strategy. It is expected that a much more detailed dive into the data will be required as part of the diagnostic phase however an initial reading of the background material indicates the plan in Buckinghamshire is in line with national priorities.
- 5.2. Buckinghamshire Council has had an initial planning conversation with the national DBV team and received the introductory information (an extract of which is included at Appendix 1).
- 5.3. A data grant of £45,000 has been received by the Council in order to support the data preparation for the DBV Diagnostic. This grant needs to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March and plans are being developed to utilise the funding to support processes to ensure data quality and effective systems for data reporting from our systems. It is expected that the data requirements will be in the same format as current statutory returns (SEN2).
- 5.4. Engagement from the DBV team is expected in the summer this year and there will be a requirement to attend training sessions and commence the data analysis. Engagement will be needed from this group and other stakeholders at the diagnostic phase and in developing the action plan.





# Schools Forum 21 March 2023

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Delivering Better Value in SEND  
*(Extract from DBV Introductory pack)*



# Background

## ● DBV Diagnostic: The Objective & Approach

### DBV Programme Objective

**Delivering Better Value (DBV)** is a programme working to **identify and implement** local and national opportunities to **improve the outcomes** for children and young people with SEND

In order to achieve this we know;



The child or young person must remain at the centre of everything we do.



We must listen to the challenges from the perspective of those receiving support from the system.



Collaboration is key, with your neighbours, partners and the children and families you support.



Funding is a challenge and key source of frustration that should be considered throughout the planning.

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Therefore the DBV programme is designing its support through 2 key approaches;

### Short Term Help

To identify **sustainable changes in each LA** that can drive **high quality outcomes** for children and young people with SEND, and to support you in building an evidence-based **grant application** to assist the implementation of those changes

### Informing Long Term Reform

Build an objective evidence base across a third of the sector, which can be used to:

- **Inform future policy** and reform
- Build a **national playbook** & share best practice
- Inform **future national programmes** of similar scale and intent

# Objectives of the DBV Diagnostic

## DBV Diagnostic: The Objective & Approach

### WHAT IS THE DBV DIAGNOSTIC?

The diagnostic will help you **identify sustainable changes** in your LA that can drive **high quality outcomes** for children and young people with SEND, and to support you in building an **evidence-based grant application** to assist the **implementation** of those changes

#### Participative Process



The process is designed to engage and excite your workforce, local stakeholders and partners, including parent-carers, children and young people, healthcare providers and education providers

#### Tailoring an Evidence Base



The process will give you a bespoke and tailored evidence base to give your ongoing improvement activities the best possible chance of success

#### Grant Application



The process is working towards building a grant application for investment to support you through Phase 2 (Implementation)

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### HOW IS THE DIAGNOSTIC DELIVERED?

The diagnostic is delivered through a **modular approach**, incorporating training, data analysis and engagement activities

This is not a 'one size fits all' approach – support is **tailored** to each Local Authority, within this framework, to ensure everyone receives the best outcome

Evaluation & Setup

**Module 1:**  
Baselines and Forecasts

**Module 2:**  
Root Cause Diagnostics

**Module 3:**  
Implementation Planning

Grant Application

#### Linking Financial & Operational Performance



From the very **beginning**, you will make use of **your data** to link **financial and operational performance**, to ensure a **sustainable** service can be delivered into the future

#### In-Person Training



Tactical training will be delivered within groups of Local Authorities (waves), allowing **multiple Local Authorities** to come together to **share expertise**, learn from each other and support each other through the process

#### Engagement Activities



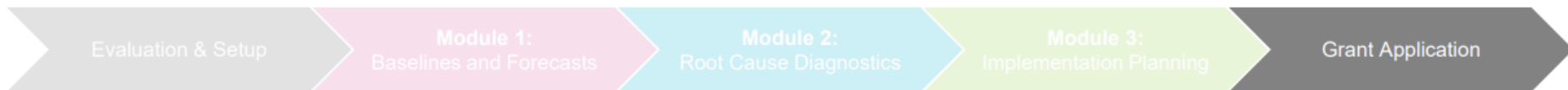
Case reviews and deep-dive activities will be completed engaging all relevant system stakeholders, allowing a multi-disciplinary and co-productive approach to be taken

# Objectives of the DBV Diagnostic

## DBV Diagnostic: Aims & Objectives



**Objective:** To identify sustainable changes that will drive high quality outcomes for CYP & support you in developing your grant application



In support of your grant application, we'll work with you to demonstrate the evidence needed to meet the **End of Phase 1 criteria** (either through the completion of the modules or submission of pre-existing evidence). This evidence base will need to be supplemented by an investment case for the grant monies.

### END OF PHASE 1 CRITERIA

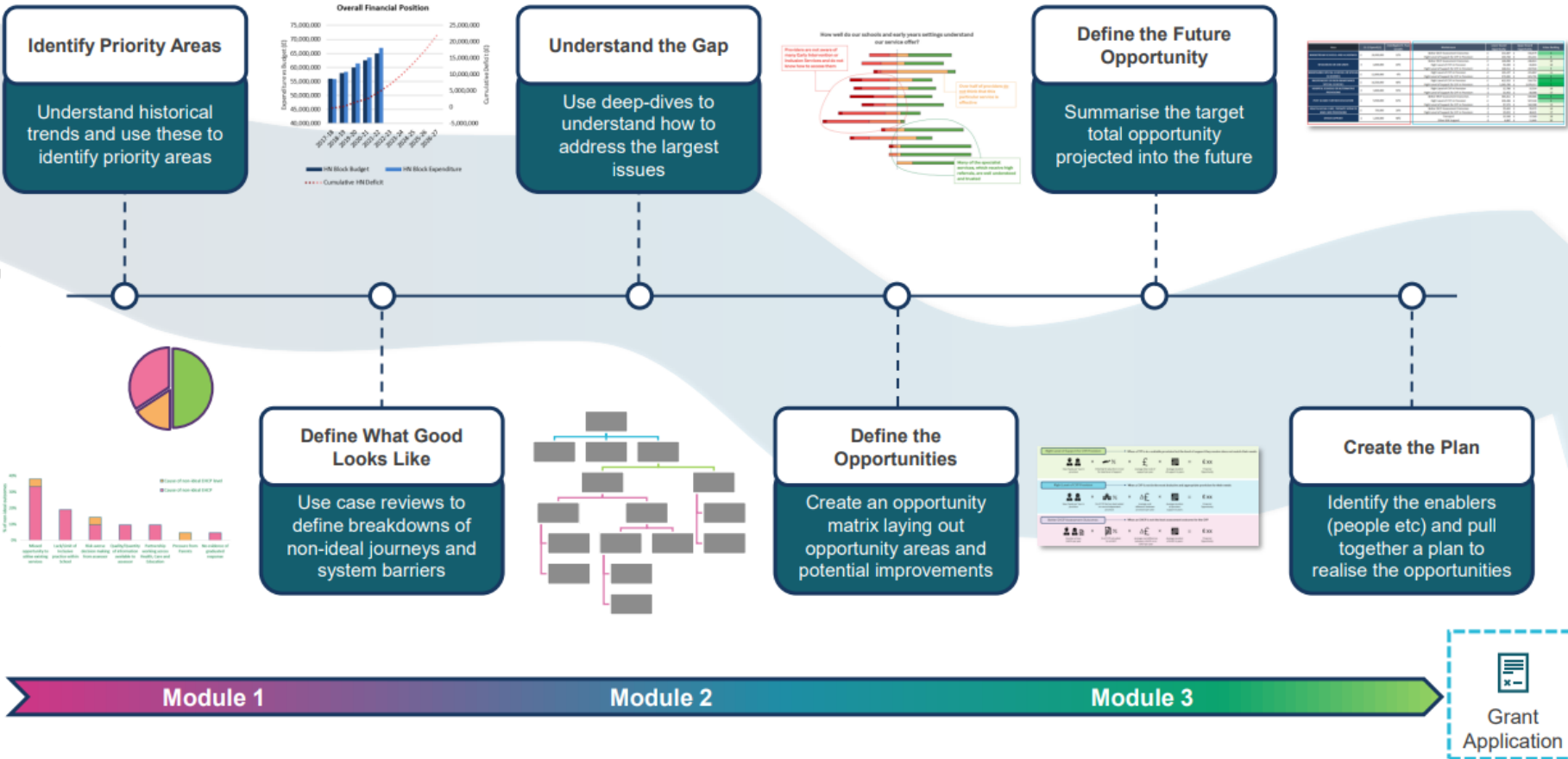
<p><b>Where possible, local partners &amp; stakeholders have been involved in designing the implementation plan and have been briefed on it</b></p> <p><i>Enabled by Evaluation &amp; Setup</i></p> <p><b>Relationships with local partners and stakeholders</b> are understood</p> <p>A clear <b>plan to engage</b> local partners and stakeholders</p> <p>The implementation plan has been <b>co-produced and socialised</b> with local partners and stakeholders</p>	<p><b>You know how the impact on key measures will profile over time</b></p> <p><i>Enabled by Module 1 outputs</i></p> <p>Clear <b>profiles of spend and numbers of children</b> receiving different support in <b>future mitigated and unmitigated positions</b></p> <p>Reasonable <b>calculations and assumptions</b> to generate the profiles</p>	<p><b>You know what to change to have the biggest impact on key measures/outcomes</b></p> <p><i>Enabled by Module 2 outputs</i></p> <p>Sufficient <b>evidence to determine the priority local changes</b></p> <p>Identified biggest impact areas based on <b>opportunity for improvement and feasibility</b></p>	<p><b>You know the conditions required for a successful implementation and have a plan to meet those conditions</b></p> <p><i>Enabled by Module 3 outputs</i></p> <p><b>Resource required</b> to deliver the implementation is known and there is an approach to secure it</p> <p><b>Digital infrastructure</b> required is known and there is an approach to deliver it</p> <p><b>Governance</b> for implementation mapped out, decision makers bought in and owners agreed</p>	<p><b>You have a realistic activity plan to implement the high impact changes</b></p> <p><i>Enabled by Module 3 outputs</i></p> <p><b>Defined workstreams</b> within overall implementation plan</p> <p>Activity plan per workstream with <b>clear milestones and expected completion dates</b></p> <p><b>Risk analysis</b> of implementation plan, with mitigating actions devised</p>
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# DBV Diagnostic – illustrative LA experience



## DBV Diagnostic: Illustrative Local Authority Experience

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