



Report to Schools Forum

Date: 21st March 2023

Title: Report of the DSG Expenditure Review Group

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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 2nd 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 22nd 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

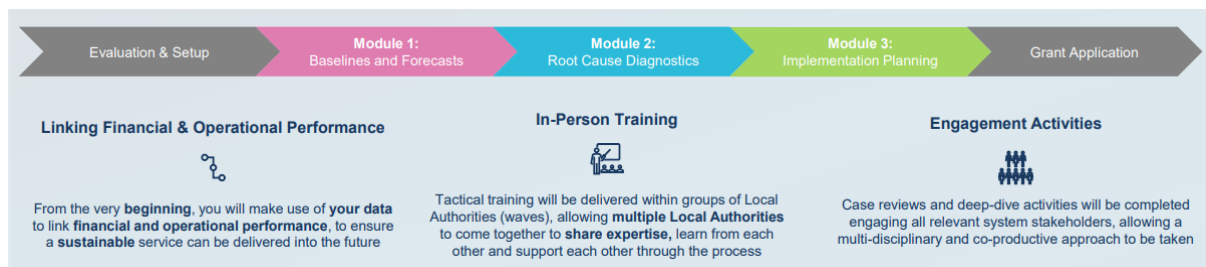
- 3.1. Delivering Better Value (DBV) is a programme working to identify and implement local and national opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- 3.2. There are two main approaches within the programme:

- 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 31st 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.