
High Needs Block: Invest to Save Proposals

Report being considered by: Schools' Forum on 16th July 2018

Report Author: Ian Pearson, Michelle Sancho, Jane Seymour

Item for: Discussion **By:** All Forum Members

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The Heads Funding Group / Schools Forum has requested proposals for invest to save projects using £100,000 of one off funding in 2018-19.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to put forward proposals for consideration.

2. Recommendation

To take a view on the proposals outlined in Part 3 of this report.

Will the recommendation require the matter to be referred to the Council or the Executive for final determination?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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3. Introduction

3.1 The High Needs Block overspend in 2017-18 was £256K less than anticipated. The Heads Funding Group / Schools Forum agreed to use £156K of this to reduce the deficit in 2018-19 and wished to consider using £100K on projects which would help to generate savings in the High Needs Block.

4. Draft SEND Strategy 2018-23

4.1 One of the key thrusts of the draft SEND Strategy (currently out to consultation) is to reduce reliance on specialist placements for children with EHCPs by increasing the capacity of mainstream schools to meet needs and by creating more local provision in West Berkshire for children with ASD, SEMH and MLD, (as these are the areas where the main pressures for placements exist).

4.2 The SEND Strategy will be published in October 2018 following the public consultation and approval through the relevant channels.

4.3 Many of the proposals in the SEND Strategy, such as creating new resourced units in schools, will require ongoing revenue funding and will not therefore be suitable for consideration for funding from this source as the £100,000 available in 2018-19 is available as one off funding only.

4.4 However, some of the proposals which relate to improving capacity in mainstream schools could be implemented with non-recurring funding.

5. Proposals for consideration

5.1 Equipment for children attending resourced schools and nursery schools

The Schools Forum accepted a proposal, as part of the HNB savings programme in 2018-19, to delete the equipment budget on the basis that schools would pay for specialist equipment for children with EHCPs from their delegated SEN budgets. However, nursery schools do not have delegated SEN funding to pay for equipment. Similarly, it would not be reasonable to expect schools which host resourced units on behalf of the Local Authority to fund equipment for children in the resource as they would then face disproportionate costs compared to other schools. It is therefore proposed that **£10,000** is set aside to meet the costs of equipment in nursery schools and schools with resourced units.

5.2 Training programme for behaviour leads in schools with high exclusions

A bid has been made for funding from the Strategic School Improvement Fund for a programme of support and training for schools with high exclusions. Children who are excluded from school sometimes go on to need specialist SEMH placements. The project has been developed with schools and would involve a number of targeted schools identifying a behaviour lead who would access a 12 month CPD programme, with funding provided for supply cover. The behaviour leads would become part of a peer network and would receive mentoring from an Educational Psychologist, as well as accessing the training modules. The bid which has been put forward is for £167,000. If the bid is not successful, it would be possible to tailor the programme to be delivered for a lower amount. It is estimated that the project could be scaled back but still deliver 12 training modules and mentoring time for all secondary schools and the five primary schools with the highest exclusions at a cost of **£78,400**.

5.3 Delivery of PPEP Care Training Module on ASD for schools

PPEP Care stands for Psychological Perspectives in Education and Primary Care. It is a nationally recognised programme which offers training, usually delivered by CAMHS professionals, to staff in primary care (eg. GPs) and also to schools. The aim is to support schools to support children with mental health difficulties, drawing on a range of psychological techniques. A range of modules are available, including, for example, supporting children with anxiety; low mood and depression; behaviour difficulties etc. A new module has recently been developed on ASD. Children with ASD currently represent the greatest additional costs in terms of specialist placements. It would be possible to offer this module to all mainstream schools. Training costs would normally be met by charging schools; however, the HFG / Schools Forum may wish to consider using some funds to provide the training for free and also to fund supply cover to release staff to attend, in order to incentivise schools to take part. This could be achieved at a cost of **£10,000**.

5.4 Setting up on line forum for SENCOs

We have clear evidence that SEND practice in schools is variable, with some excellent practice and some schools needing support to develop their practice.

We already have a range of support in place for SENCOs, but recognising the practical difficulties involved for SENCOs in being able to attend training and networking events, an on line SENCO forum could be a helpful way for SENCOs to share ideas and expertise and in particular for less experienced SENCOs to be supported by others. More work would need to be done to identify costings but this could be a relatively low cost initiative. The remaining **£1,600** could be set aside for this purpose.

5.5 Funding for resourced schools experiencing financial pressures

West Berkshire has 11 schools with resourced units which are funded through a banding system. A number of schools with resourced units have expressed concern about their ability to meet the needs of children in the resource from the funding available. Some schools have said that they are having to subsidise the resource from the main school budget. There are a number of reasons for this:

- The value of funding bands has been reduced in recent years
- Schools now only receive £10K place funding for any vacant places but still have to fund their core staffing including a full time teacher in charge
- Children being referred to resourced units are increasingly complex
- Schools in some cases had surplus funding in their resourced unit budgets which they were able to use to offset these pressures, but these surpluses have now been exhausted.

It will be necessary to review the mechanism for funding resourced units in order to address these issues in the longer term.

In the short term, there may be some immediate pressures which need to be met, such as funding additional children going in to the new Fir Tree ASD Resource in September 2018. However, it is recommended that if there is a need to provide additional in year funding for resourced units this should be a pressure against the £156,000 rather than being taken from the £100,000 for invest to save initiatives.

6. Appendices

Appendix A - Strategic School Improvement Fund Bid

