

High Needs Block Budget 2019/20

Report being considered by: Schools Forum on 11th March 2019

Report Author: Ian Pearson, Michelle Sancho, Jane Seymour

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

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report sets out the current financial position of the high needs budget for 2018/19 and the position known so far for 2019/20, including the likely shortfall. It also seeks a decision on the proposal to fund a SEND Strategy Officer from HNB in order to take forward projects in the SEND Strategy to achieve long term savings.

2. Recommendation

2.1 To note the predicted shortfall and agree the proposal to fund a SEND Strategy Officer.

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 Setting a balanced budget for the High Needs Block continues to be a significant challenge; funding received for this block has only seen minimal increases for several years, yet the demand in terms of numbers of high needs pupils and unit costs of provision has continued to rise. Place funding has remained static in spite of increasing numbers, and in 2015/16 local authorities took on responsibility for students up to the age of 25 with SEND in FE colleges without the appropriate funding to cover the actual cost. The number of children with EHCPs is increasing, mainly, but not entirely due to the change in age range up to 25 years.

3.2 Up until 2016-17, West Berkshire was setting a balanced high needs budget. Since then, the budget has been under pressure on an annual basis, with savings identified each year to reduce the overspend. A decision was made to set a deficit budget for the first time in 2016/17.

3.3 Savings of £219k were implemented in 2017/18 and a further £306k in 2018/19. Despite these savings a budget was set in 2018/19 which included a planned overspend of £703k. This budgeted over spend has been revised to £447k as a result of a better than forecast deficit brought forward from 2017/18.

3.4 The pressure on the high needs block is a national issue, and many local authorities have significant over spends and have also set deficit budgets. South East regional benchmarking data shows that in West Berkshire overspending on the HNB as a % of the total HNB budget is one of the lowest in the region, but nevertheless it is an issue of ongoing concern.

3.5 Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Appendix A show where the predicted 2019-20 costs exceed 2018-19 budgets.

3.6 The net shortfall in the 2019-20 HNB budget, is **£2.18m**. This includes an 18/19 overspend of £495k which is forecast to be transferred to reserves and paid back in the next financial year, 19/20.

3.7 The net shortfall in the 2019-20 HNB budget was reported as £1.86m in the last report to the Heads' Funding Group / Schools Forum.

3.8 The increase can be explained as follows:

- Possible £32,000 increase in resourced unit place funding; to be confirmed at Schools Forum meeting.
- £198,028 increase in top up costs, mainly due to schools' fee increases and new placements, including some children who have moved in to the area, plus some additional students with EHCPs in FE Colleges.
- £33,295 increase in other statutory services, mainly due to an increase in individual packages for children with EHCPs, including Personal Budgets. These are usually children who cannot easily be placed in a school, eg. Due to high anxiety, where the Local Authority is supporting an Elective Home Education package.
- £56,200 for the proposed SEND Strategy Officer post, for discussion by the Heads Funding Group.

3.9 An extensive review of SEN provision and services took place during 2018, with full involvement of all stakeholders, including parents and schools. This resulted in a new 5 year SEND Strategy for West Berkshire which was approved by West Berkshire Council and the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group in November 2018. The Strategy seeks to address rising costs in the High Needs Block. It has 5 key priority areas:

- Improve the capacity of mainstream schools to meet the needs of children with SEND
- Expand local provision for children with SEND in order to reduce reliance on external placements
- Improve post 16 opportunities for young people with SEND, including better access to employment
- Improve preparation for adulthood, including transition from children's to adults' services in Social Care and Health
- Improve access to universal and targeted Health services for children with SEND

3.10 Work is now under way to implement the strategy, which should achieve savings in the High Needs Block over the next five years, but savings will take time to be realised. It is likely that in the short term (starting in 2020-21) costs will actually increase whilst new provision is being set up, as there will be an element of double funding whilst new provision grows before out of area placements start to reduce.

3.11 This report includes a proposal to fund a SEND Strategy Officer post from the HNB in order to progress projects in the SEND Strategy which will make long term savings. See section 6.

3.12 Details of the services paid for from the high needs budget and the corresponding budget information are set out in Appendix A, together with an explanation of the reasons for budget increases.

4. Summary Financial Position

4.1 The latest estimate of expenditure in the High Needs Block budget for both 2018/19 and 2019/20 is set out in Table 1. This will continue to be refined over the next few months, particularly in relation to the largest variable element, which is top up funding. The figures are based on all services continuing at current staffing levels and contract costs, with no change in the funding rates for top ups and the current/known number and funding level of pupils.

4.2 Most of the DSG allocation for the high needs block is now confirmed. Part of it is estimated and will be based on the actual number of pupils in special schools in the October 2018 census, and import/export adjustments based on the January 2019 census and February 2019 ILR. A funding increase of 1% on the 2017 baseline is expected in 2019/20.

4.3 The Department of Education announced in December 2018 an additional £381k of high needs funding for 2018-19 and 2019-20 in recognition of the cost pressures that Local Authorities are experiencing on the high needs block. This has been included in the forecast figure.

4.4

Table 1	2018/19 Budget £	2018/19 Forecast £	2019/20 £	2020/21 Estimate £
Place Funding	5,841,830	5,841,830	6,086,000	6,086,000
Top Up Funding	11,227,150	11,030,080	12,119,960	12,119,960
PRU Funding (Top Ups Only)	542,950	884,030	1,089,100	1,089,100
Other Statutory Services	1,262,500	1,435,230	1,467,980	1,467,980
Non Statutory Services	774,320	780,120	857,670	857,670
Support Services Recharges	127,290	127,290	127,290	127,290
Total Expenditure	19,776,040	20,098,580	21,748,000	21,748,000
HNB DSG Allocation - confirmed	-19,664,777	-19,557,777	-18,921,309	-18,921,309
HNB DSG Allocation - provisional			-768,000	-768,000
Additional high needs funding	-381,000	-381,000	-381,000	
Transfer to Other Blocks	27,000	27,000		
HNB DSG Overspend from previous year	308,635	308,635	495,438	2,173,129
Total DSG Funding	-19,710,142	-19,603,142	-19,574,871	-17,516,180
Shortfall	65,898	495,438	2,173,129	4,231,820

4.5 There is a forecast shortfall of **£2.17m** in the 2019/20 HNB which may change as the budgets continue to be finalised.

Appendix A sets out the detail of the budgets included within the High Needs Block, and the reasons for the pressure on the 2019-20 HNB budget. Options for savings have previously been presented. However, the Schools Forum at its last meeting decided that no savings should be taken other than those generated by bringing the Home Education Service in house.

5. Recommendation of Heads' Funding Group

The Heads' Funding Group on 27th February recommended that the proposal to fund a SEND Strategy Officer from the HNB should be agreed.

6. Appendices

Appendix A – High Needs Budget detail

High Needs Budget Detail

1. PLACE FUNDING – STATUTORY

- 1.1 Place funding is agreed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and has to be passed on to the institution, forming their base budget. Academy and post 16 places are included in the initial HNB allocation but the agreed place numbers are then deducted and paid to the institution direct (DSG top slice). From 2018/19 pre 16 resource unit place funding was reduced from £10,000 to £6,000 per place, and each pupil within the unit is included in the main school formula funding allocation.
- 1.2 The ESFA will not fund any overall increases to places. If additional places are needed in academies or post 16 institutions, a request can be made to the ESFA. However, any additional places agreed would be top sliced from West Berkshire's HNB allocation in 2019-20.
- 1.3 Requests have been made for the following:
 - 1 additional place at West Berkshire Training Consortium to reflect actual student numbers
 - 1 additional place at the Trinity ASD Resource to reflect actual pupil numbers.
 - 43 additional places at Newbury College to reflect actual student numbers.
- 1.4 The reason it has been necessary to request a significant increase in planned places for Newbury College is that new regulations require the Local Authority in which an FE College is based to pay for planned places for all students with high needs, regardless of where they are resident. An import / export adjustment will be made to the HNB in 2019-20 based on January census data, so this funding should be recouped from the relevant Local Authorities.
- 1.5 It should be noted that the Fir Tree ASD Resource continues to grow in size and is likely to need more than its current 5 planned places. Additional places have not been requested from the ESFA as it is not yet clear how many places will be needed for September 2019. Any additional places needed will be funded from the top up budgets.
- 1.6 The actual number of places occupied in West Berkshire's special schools is greater than the planned places which are funded. There continues to be an increase in demand for places in special schools. **Table 1** currently shows no increase to special school planned places, as there is no additional planned place funding to allocate unless there is surplus planned place funding in other institutions which can be reallocated. If no place funding can be released from other institutions, and if it is decided that additional planned places should be funded at the special schools, this is a pressure on the High Needs Block.

TABLE 1 – Place Funding Budgets	2018/19 Budget			2019/20 Estimate		
	No. of Places	£	Current No. of Pupils	Proposed No. of	£	Difference in number
Special Schools – pre 16 (90540)	286	2,860,000	-296	286	2,860,000	0
Special Schools – post 16 (DSG top slice)	79	790,000	-94	79	790,000	0
Resource Units Maintained –	35	242,000	-30	35	234,000	0
Resource Units Academies –	95	599,830	-89	96	576,000	1
Mainstream Maintained – post 16 (DSG top slice)	8	40,000	-5	5	30,000	-3
Mainstream Academies – post 16 (DSG top slice)	13	80,000	-11	13	78,000	0
Further Education	95	570,000	-149	139	858,000	44
PRU Place Funding (90320)	66	660,000	-66	66	660,000	0
TOTAL	677	5,841,830	-740	719	6,086,000	42

2. TOP UP FUNDING – STATUTORY

- 2.1 Top up funding is paid to the institutions where we are placing pupils who live in West Berkshire (we do not pay our institutions top up funding for pupils who live outside West Berkshire). **Table 2** shows the budget and forecast for 2018/19 and the estimate for 2019/20.

TABLE 2	2017-18 Budget		2018-19 Budget			2019-20 Estimate	
Top Up Budgets	Budget £	Outturn £	Budget £	Forecast £ (Month 10)	Over/ (Under) £	Estimate £	Difference 18-19 budget & 19-20 prediction
Special Schools Maintained (90539)	3,237,280	3,262,595	3,300,420	3,362,730	62,310	3,463,450	163,030
Non WBC special schools (90548)	1,086,890	1,050,611	1,098,070	984,610	-113,460	1,065,960	-32,110
Resource Units Maintained (90617)	202,620	240,168	293,020	274,240	-18,780	270,350	-22,670
Resource Units Academies (90026)	768,370	723,750	854,270	815,680	-38,590	946,530	92,260
Resource Units Non WBC (90618)	55,000	105,340	107,000	135,180	28,180	143,580	36,580
Mainstream Maintained (90621)	534,010	574,177	541,560	650,410	108,850	667,330	125,770
Mainstream Academies (90622)	191,410	193,660	185,170	247,080	61,910	267,460	82,290
Mainstream Non WBC (90624)	66,960	78,694	75,000	83,920	8,920	73,030	-1,970
Non Maintained Special Schools (90575)	891,130	717,499	840,100	803,420	-36,680	1,030,380	190,280

TABLE 2 - continued	2017-18 Budget		2018-19 Budget			2019-20 Estimate	
Top Up Budgets	Budget £	Outturn £	Budget £	Forecast £ (Month 10)	Over/ (Under) £	Estimate £	Difference 18-19 budget & 19-20 prediction
Independent Special Schools (90579)	2,012,700	1,954,571	2,436,400	2,321,260	-115,140	2,683,020	246,620
Further Education (90580)	1,309,980	1,155,852	1,396,140	1,267,940	-128,200	1,408,870	12,730
Disproportionate HN Pupils (90627)	100,000	100,972	100,000	83,610	-16,390	100,000	0
TOTAL	10,456,350	10,157,889	11,227,150	11,030,080	-197,070	12,119,960	892,810

2.2 Most top up budgets are under pressure, with the type of placement creating the greatest pressure shown below in order of cost.

- Independent special schools
- Non maintained special schools
- West Berkshire maintained special schools
- Resourced units in academies

2.3 The predictions of cost for 2019-20 take in to account known pupils whose needs can no longer be met in local schools, together with some cases which are due to go to the SEND Tribunal. It is not possible to predict all pupils who may need placements in 2019/20. The figures assume a middle ground between the best case scenario and the worst case scenario (financially) in terms of Tribunal outcomes.

2.4 Independent and non-maintained special schools

Both of these budgets are currently underspent, but will be under pressure in 2019-20. This is partly due to the full year costs of placements made during 2018-19 hitting the budget in 2019-20. There was also one case upheld by the SEND Tribunal with an annual cost of over £100,000. Pressure continues to be mainly for SEMH and ASD placements, plus some HI placements.

2.5 West Berkshire maintained special schools

This pressure reflects both increasing numbers in our special schools and the need to compensate for inadequate planned place funding through the top up budget.

2.6 Resourced units in academies

This pressure is mainly due to numbers at Trinity and Fir Tree ASD resources growing, as planned. These additional pupils may have been otherwise placed in more expensive special school placements. In fact it is likely that the decrease in non-West Berkshire special school placement costs is partly attributable to the increasing numbers in these provisions.

2.7 EHCPs in maintained mainstream schools and academies

There is also pressure on the budgets for EHCPs in mainstream schools (both maintained and academies). This relates more to an increase in the average cost of

an EHCP in a mainstream school, rather than a very significant increase in overall numbers of EHCPs.

2.8 Non West Berkshire resourced units

This increase is mainly created by increasing use of an ASD Resource in Bracknell for young people whose needs cannot be met in our own ASD Resourced units. These placements are more cost effective than specialist ASD school placements.

2.9 Non West Berkshire special schools

Costs against this budget have been going down, due to two pupils leaving a special free school, one to be electively home educated and one to attend a PRU. Additionally, two pupils have been placed at the Fir Tree and Trinity ASD Resources who would otherwise have attended a special free school.

2.10 Resourced units in West Berkshire maintained schools

These costs have been reducing slightly, due to smaller numbers than expected in the Winchcombe Speech and Language Resource and some movement of children out of the West Berkshire area from other resourced units.

2.11 FE Colleges

There is a current underspend of £128,200 on this cost centre. This is due in part to three post 16 high needs pupils being supported in alternative provision. This budget will need to increase slightly for 2019-20 due to an increased number of students with EHCPs in FE colleges and due to some potential Independent Specialist FE Placements for September 2019.

Plans are in place to open a new post 19 provision in September 2019 in conjunction with West Berkshire Training Consortium and the Castle School. The course will be a supported internship with the aim that students on the course move into employment after one year. The top up effect should be broadly neutral as the students would have received equivalent top up at FE College. Over time this provision should help to reduce costs but costs per place are relatively high in the first year whilst the course is being established. Costs will be reviewed in year 2 of the course.

2.12 EHCPs in Non West Berkshire mainstream schools

These costs should be slightly reduced next year due to two pupils in non-West Berkshire mainstream schools moving to special schools. However, it is a budget which is based on a small group of pupils and can fluctuate significantly.

3. PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (PRU) – STATUTORY

3.1 Table 3 shows the budgets for PRU top ups.

TABLE 3	2017/18 Budget		2018/19 Budget			2019/20	
PRU top up Budgets	Budget £	Outturn £	Budget £	Forecast £ (Month 10)	Over/ (under) £	Estimate £	Difference 18/19 budget & 19/20
PRU Top Up Funding (90625)	875,870	1,086,906	542,950	757,700	214,750	757,700	214,750
PRU EHCP Pupils (90628)	0	0	0	126,330	126,330	331,400	331,400
Non WBC PRU Top Up Funding (90626)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	875,870	1,086,906	542,950	884,030	341,080	1,089,100	546,150

3.2 The current year budget was based on schools making an agreed 80% contribution for pupils that they placed. Permanent exclusions and sixth form are funded 100% by the High Needs Block less the average pupil led funding contribution recovered from schools. The estimate for 19/20 PRU Top Up Funding is based on the current year forecast as at period 9. The 18/19 forecast is based on an estimate of the current mix of placements. Further details can be found in a separate report.

3.3 The iCollege top up rate will increase from April 2019 in line with inflation. The top up rates will therefore increase by 3% for the financial year 2019/20. However, it is hoped the implementation of the revised percentage split for placements will reduce the costs to the high needs block which will offset this inflation increase.

3.4 The number of pupils with EHCPs being placed in PRUs is increasing as this can be an appropriate and cost effective provision for some young people. Under the new funding arrangements for PRUs these placements have to be funded from the SEN budget. Our estimate of these costs is £331,400 for 2019-20. However, these placements are more cost effective than independent and non-maintained special school placements.

4. OTHER STATUTORY SERVICES

4.1 **Table 4** details the budgets for other statutory services.

TABLE 4	2017/18 Budget		2018/19 Budget			2019/20	
Other Statutory Services	Budget £	Outturn £	Budget £	Forecast £ (Month 10)	Over/ (under) £	Estimate £	Difference 18/19 budget & 19/20
Applied Behaviour Analysis (90240)	76,000	52,850	75,000	119,570	44,570	119,120	44,120
Sensory Impairment (90290)	215,710	221,312	172,750	246,330	73,580	236,000	63,250
Engaging Potential (90577)	455,160	456,177	456,000	491,670	35,670	527,150	71,150
Equipment for SEN Pupils (90565)	10,000	3,397	0	0	0	15,000	15,000
Therapy Services (90295)	267,460	266,257	240,760	261,470	20,710	261,470	20,710
Elective home Education Monitoring (90288)	27,660	23,482	27,990	26,190	-1,800	28,240	250
Home Tuition Service (90315)	345,000	320,100	245,000	245,000	0	245,000	0
Hospital Tuition (90610)	45,000	1,646	45,000	45,000	0	36,000	-9,000
TOTAL	1,441,990	1,345,221	1,262,500	1,435,230	172,730	1,467,980	205,480

4.2 Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

4.2.1 This budget supports a small number of children with EHC Plans for whom the Authority has agreed an ABA programme. ABA is an intensive intervention programme for children with autism which aims to modify behaviours which are typical of ASD in order to allow children to function more successfully in school and in society.

4.2.2 This budget also covers the cost of children with EHC Plans accessing other bespoke educational packages where this is the most appropriate and cost effective way of meeting their needs including SEN Personal Budgets.

4.2.3 The increase in costs represents a small number of children with ASD and high levels of anxiety who were school refusers and required a bespoke package to support elective home education provided by parents.

4.3 Sensory Impairment

4.3.1 Support for children with hearing, visual and multi-sensory impairments is purchased from the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service. This includes support from qualified teachers of HI and VI, audiology and mobility support.

4.3.2 This budget is under pressure because of an increase in the number of children with severe hearing and visual impairments who require a high level of visits from teachers of the deaf / visually impaired.

In 2017 there were 154 in total on the caseload (HI and VI combined). This included both children with and without EHCPs. In 2018 there were 175 on the caseload, an increase of 21 or 14%. What is even more significant is the increase (within the overall increase) of children with severe and profound HI or VI who need the highest level of support on the Sensory Consortium Service matrix. In particular, there has been an increase from 6 to 15 children with very severe VI – these children need an extremely high level of support (eg, braille teaching) to be maintained in mainstream schools. They would obviously be much more costly if placed in specialist VI schools.

4.4 Engaging Potential

4.4.1 Engaging Potential is an independent special school commissioned to provide alternative educational packages for 14 young people in Key Stage 4. Students placed at Engaging Potential are those who have Statements or EHC Plans for social, emotional and mental health difficulties and whose needs cannot be met in any other provision. This can include young people who have been excluded from specialist SEMH schools. The unit cost of a place represents good value for money compared to other independent schools for SEMH which typically start at around £70K per annum. The increase in cost for 2019-20 relates to reduced income for young people placed by other Local Authorities.

4.5 Equipment for SEN Pupils

4.5.1 This budget used to fund large items of equipment such as specialist chairs and communication aids for pupils with EHC Plans. The budget has been reduced a number of times in previous HNB savings programmes and was removed entirely in 2018-19 on the basis that schools would meet these costs. However, this created a pressure for nurseries as they do not have delegated SEN budgets, and for resourced schools which have a disproportionate number of children with specialist equipment needs. It was agreed in 2018-19 that a one off amount of £10,000 would be made available to meet these needs. It was initially recommended that a £10,000 per annum budget should be restored for this purpose in 2019-20. However, equipment needs in resourced schools and nurseries has now exceeded £10,000 so it is recommended that this budget be re-established at £15,000 for 2019-20.

4.6 Therapy Services (Contract with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust)

4.6.1 The therapy services budget covers the costs for children with SEN who have speech and language therapy or occupational therapy in their EHC Plans.

4.6.2 Therapy services are provided by the Authority solely to children who have the need for a service stipulated and quantified in their EHC Plan. It is a statutory duty for the Local Authority to provide these therapies in these circumstances.

4.6.3 A number of reductions have been made to this budget in previous HNB savings programmes. In 2018-19 this budget was reduced in anticipation of a 10% reduction in the contract cost but only a 5% reduction was achieved, so there is a pressure for 2019-20.

4.7 Elective Home Education Monitoring

4.7.1 The Elective Home Education monitoring sits in the Education Welfare and Safeguarding Service and consists of one part time teacher who monitors children who are electively home educated. There is a statutory duty to monitor arrangements for EHE made by parents. Elective Home Education numbers are growing, both locally and nationally. This may be a pressure in due course.

4.8 Home Tuition

4.8.1 The Home Tuition Service is a statutory service providing home tuition to children with medical conditions and illness that prevent them accessing full-time school. It is currently commissioned by WBC from the iCollege.

4.8.2 It was agreed at the last Heads Funding Group / Schools Forum that a saving of £23,000 could be achieved in 2019-20 by bringing this service in house.

4.9 Hospital Tuition

4.9.1 Hospital tuition is a recent addition to HNB funding. WBC is now obliged to pay the educational element of specialist hospital placements, usually for severe mental health issues. These placements are decided by NHS colleagues and we have no influence over the placement or duration of stay. We are negotiating with the settings to ensure we are only charged for the education a young person actually receives and would benefit from. As numbers and costs are impossible to predict, it is proposed that the 2019-20 budget is based on the 2018-19 projected spend.

5. NON STATUTORY Services

- 5.1 **Table 5** details the non-statutory service budgets for 2017/18, 2018/19 and estimates for 2019/20. The latest forecast is that in the majority of cases these budgets should be on-line, other than the LAL Service (see paragraph 5.3 below). These services are non-statutory so there is more potential scope to make savings, although a reduction in any of these budgets is likely to increase pressure on statutory budgets.
- 5.2 The table shows the budget for these services in 2019/20 assuming that the services continue and there are no changes to staffing levels.
- 5.3 The LAL budget was reduced by 50% in 2018-19 on the basis that schools would pay 50% of the cost of these places. As a result of charging being introduced, referrals to LALs reduced for the first time. Only 33 of 48 places were taken up, resulting in a shortfall in income. Assuming that the status quo remains, and charging continues at 50% in 2019-20, and assuming that the rate of take up would be similar next year to this, there would be a shortfall of approximately £16,000 in 2019-20.

TABLE 5	2017/18 Budget		2018/19 Budget			2019/20	
Non Statutory Services	Budget £	Outturn £	Budget £	Forecast £ (Month 10)	Over/ (under) £	Estimate £	Difference 18/19 budget & 19/20
Language and Literacy Centres LALs (90555)	116,200	116,200	82,400	91,700	9,300	98,400	16,000
Specialist Inclusion Support Service (90585)	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	0	50,000	0
PRU Outreach Service (90582)	77,000	77,000	61,200	61,200	0	61,200	0
SEN Pre School Children (90238)	In Early Years	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cognition & Learning Team (90280)	311,840	314,449	319,170	315,670	-3,500	325,660	6,490
ASD Advisory Service (90830)	139,560	139,567	141,550	141,550	0	146,210	4,660
Vulnerable Children (90961)	63,980	63,980	50,000	50,000	0	50,000	0
Early Development and Inclusion Team (90287)	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	0	40,000	0
Dingley's Promise (90581)	0	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000	0
SEND Strategy Officer						56,200	56,200
TOTAL	798,580	801,196	774,320	780,120	5,800	857,670	83,350

5.4 Language and Literacy Centres (LALs)

5.4.1 This budget funds the primary LALs at Theale and Winchcombe schools. The LALs provide intensive literacy support for primary children with severe specific literacy difficulties. 48 places per year are available across the two LALs.

5.4.2 See also paragraph 5.3 above.

5.5 Specialist Inclusion Support Service

5.5.1 This service provides outreach support from West Berkshire's special schools to mainstream schools to support the inclusion of children with learning and complex needs in their local mainstream schools.

5.5.2 This budget has been subject to reductions in the previous financial years with the special schools providing the service absorbing the cost.

5.6 PRU Outreach

5.6.1 The PRU Outreach Service offers consultancy / outreach support mainly to students who have been attending the iCollege and are starting to attend a mainstream school. Schools may request Outreach for any pupil causing concern but it is dependent on capacity.

5.7 SEN Pre School Children

5.7.1 This budget provides one to one support to enable children with SEN to access non maintained and voluntary pre-school settings.

5.8 Cognition and Learning Team

5.8.1 The Cognition and Learning Team (CALT) provides advice, support and training to mainstream schools to help them to meet the needs of children with SEN. Staff are experienced SENCOs with higher level SEN qualifications.

5.8.2 Many primary schools are reliant on this service to supplement their own SEN provision and expertise, especially schools where the Head has to act as SENCO or where there is an inexperienced SENCO.

5.8.3 This is a partially traded service. All schools receive a small amount of free core service, but the majority of support now has to be purchased by schools.

5.9 ASD Advisory Service

5.9.1 The ASD Advisory Service provides advice, support and training for mainstream schools on meeting the needs of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The purpose of the service is to enable children with ASD to be successfully included in mainstream schools wherever possible.

5.9.2 The context for this service is vastly increasing numbers of children with ASD diagnoses and mainstream schools having more and more difficulty meeting the needs of these children. The majority of our placements in non-West Berkshire special schools, independent special schools and non-maintained special schools are for children with ASD.

5.10 Vulnerable Children

5.10.1 The Vulnerable Children Fund is a small budget used to help schools support their most vulnerable pupils on an emergency, unpredicted or short term basis.

5.10.2 The budget has gradually been reduced from £120K over the past few years. The criteria have strengthened, with funding allocated for shorter periods and fewer extensions. However this is a well-used resource that helps schools support vulnerable pupils with complex needs.

5.11 Early Development and Inclusion Team

5.11.1 The service comprises of 1.7 teachers who are specialists in early years and SEND. Children under 5 who are identified by Health professionals as having significant SEND are referred to this service. Staff initially visit children in their homes (if they are not yet in an early years setting) in order to promote their educational development and model strategies and resources for parents to use to support their child's progress.

5.11.2 EDIT teachers also assist with the transition to early years settings and schools, providing support and training for staff to help them to meet the child's needs, and continuing to visit for a period of time to provide ongoing support and advice. They also help to coordinate support which the family is receiving from other professionals.

5.11.3 The service is currently supporting approximately 100 children. It has been reduced in size in recent years from 3.4 to 1.7 staff.

5.12 Dingley's Promise

5.12.1 Dingley's Promise is a charitable organisation which provides pre-school provision for children under 5 with SEND in West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham. It is the only specialist early years SEND setting in the private, voluntary and independent early years sector in West Berkshire. It provides an alternative to mainstream early year's settings, where experience and expertise in SEND can vary greatly. Parents are able to take up their early year's entitlement at Dingley's Promise, rather than at a mainstream early years setting, if they wish. However, Dingley's Promise are only able to claim the standard hourly rate for providing the early years entitlement as mainstream settings, in spite of offering specialist provision, higher ratios and more one to one support.

5.12.2 Historically, Reading and Wokingham Local Authorities gave grants to Dingley's Promise from their HNB budgets to top up the hourly rate, in recognition of their specialist offer, but West Berkshire did not. In 2017-18, the service was running at a loss and there was a risk it would cease to be viable in this area without some Council funding. Dingley's Promise as an organisation is active in funding raising and seeking grants but these sources of funding are unreliable. It was agreed in 2018-19 that a grant of £30,000 would be made to Dingley's Promise in order to maintain the service in this area.

5.12.3 An option would have been to place these children at our maintained special schools as an alternative to supporting Dingley's Promise, but this would have had the following disadvantages:

- We would still need to provide planned place and top up funding to the special school for these children
- This would increase numbers in our special schools both in the short term and the longer term, at a time when there is already significant pressure for places
- Parents may not yet be ready to consider special school for their child

5.12.4 If Dingley's Promise had closed, children may have been admitted to mainstream early years settings which might have struggled to meet their needs. Alternatively, parents may have chosen to keep them at home until they reached statutory school age, which could have result in primary schools receiving children with SEND who were ill prepared for the transition to school. Parents may also sought EHC Plans earlier than they might otherwise have done, with associated costs to the HNB budget.

6.Proposal to fund SEND Strategy Officer

6.1 The creation of the West Berkshire SEND Strategy 2018-23 was supported by a full time SEND Strategy Officer who was in post from November 2017 to November 2018. This post was funded from temporary funding given to all Local Authorities for the specific purpose of carrying out a comprehensive SEND Review. It was one off funding and will not be repeated.

6.2 The SEND Strategy seeks to address rising costs in the High Needs Block and has 5 key priority areas:

- Improve the capacity of mainstream schools to meet the needs of children of SEND
- Expand local provision for children with SEND in order to reduce reliance on external placements
- Improve post 16 opportunities for young people with SEND, including better access to employment
- Improve preparation for adulthood, including transition from Children's to Adults' Services in Social Care and Health
- Improve access to universal and targeted Health services for children with SEND

6.3 The SEND Strategy was approved by West Berkshire Council and the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group in November 2018. It is an ambitious five year strategy which has the potential to reduce costs in the High Needs Block by, in particular, creating new local provision, such as secondary ASD / SEMH provision linked to a mainstream secondary school; primary SEMH provision, MLD resourced provision and new post 19 provision.

6.4 Some work has been done to start implementation of the SEND Strategy but progress has been severely limited by the loss of the SEND Strategy Officer post in November 2018 when funding ceased. West Berkshire Council is unusual in having no dedicated capacity within the Education Service for SEND strategic work.

6.5 In order to ensure that the SEND Strategy can be moved forward in a timely way, it is proposed that a new SEND Strategy Officer is recruited, funded from High Needs Block. In order to attract candidates of suitable calibre, and in order to maintain momentum on projects in the SEND Strategy, it is suggested that the post should be offered on a temporary contract for 3 years initially.

6.6 The post was evaluated as a Band K which equates to a salary range from £36,153 to £43,757. Assuming an appointment at the mid-point of the scale, and taking on costs in to account, the estimated annual cost of the post would be £56,200.

6.7 Without this post there is a serious risk that the potential of the SEND Strategy to realise savings in the HNB will not be realised. It is difficult to be precise about the savings which could be achieved through creation of new provision. However, the following should provide a broad illustration of potential savings from one of the projects in the strategy.

6.8 A new 50 place secondary ASD / SEMH provision is proposed, linked to a local secondary school, with an intake of 7 students per year. Some financial modelling has been done which suggests that this provision could run at a unit cost of approximately £37,000 per place. Students from the target group for this provision are currently being placed in schools which cost an average of £62,000 per place per year, therefore there is the potential to save £25,000 per student and £175,000 per year group. It would take up to 7 years for the provision to be filled (including Post 16) with a total potential annual saving of 1.25 Million.

