

# Update on HNB Invest to Save Projects

Report being considered by:	Schools' Forum on 5 December 2022		
Report Author:	Jane Seymour, Michelle Sancho		
Item for:	Decision	By	All Forum Members

## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To update the Schools Forum on the Invest to Save projects agreed in 21-22 (and carried forward in to 22-23).

1.2 To ask the Schools' Forum to consider ongoing funding of these projects.

## 2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Schools Forum agrees ongoing permanent funding of these projects.

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 In 2020-21, the Schools Forum agreed to transfer 0.25% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for initiatives which were aimed at reducing spending in the longer term. The total value of this first tranche of invest to save initiatives was £274,000. The initiatives included increased investment in the Vulnerable Children Grant (a grant which schools can access for assistance with children who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties), the creation of a Therapeutic Thinking Officer post to oversee the roll out of therapeutic thinking approaches in schools and the recruitment of two Higher Level TAs in the Autism Team to work intensively with children at risk of placement breakdown or becoming emotionally based school avoiders. These projects were also approved for continuation in to 2021-22. An impact report on these projects was considered by HFG/ Schools Forum in October 2021 and it was subsequently agreed that permanent funding for them should be incorporated in to the 2022-23 HNB budget.

3.2 The Schools Forum also made a decision on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 that a further 0.25% transfer from the Schools Block to the HNB, amounting to **£274,000**, could be made for a second tranche of invest to save initiatives. After some discussion and further meetings it was agreed that a fund which schools could access in order to support children with autism, the Autism Fund, would be created, and that half of the remaining funding would be allocated directly to secondary schools to support pupils who were Emotionally Based School Avoiders and the other half would be retained centrally to fund support for pupils in primary schools who were EBSA. The centrally funded service included the creation of an EBSA fund which participating schools can access through the Local Authority's EBSA Forum, creation of three part time EBSA posts (Education Welfare Officer, Educational

Psychologist and mental health worker in the Emotional Health Academy). Secondary schools were given the option to buy in to the centrally funded EBSA Service and one school, The Downs, chose to do so in 2021-22.

#### 4. ASD Fund (2021-22) Impact

4.1 The allocation for this initiative was **£52,685** in 2021-22. The fund is available to schools to support children with an autism diagnosis (or on the autism pathway) and can be accessed through application to the Autism Team. Applications must evidence need and demonstrate how the funds will be spent. Funding is capped at a maximum of £2000 per child. Bids are considered monthly by a panel consisting of the Learning Support Services Manager, the Autism Team Co-ordinator and a member of the Autism Team. Where funds are allocated, schools are expected to complete an 'evaluation of impact' document following the implementation of the additional support.

4.4 Schools may seek support for provision which may include but is not exclusive to:

- Resources for therapies (ie Lego, Art, Sports)
- Sensory resources
- 1:1 time each day with a professional in school
- Online tutoring

4.5 Schools are encouraged to apply for funding for interventions which benefit groups of students and where the impact will live on beyond the intervention such as:

- Social skills groups
- Emotional regulation and mindfulness sessions
- Involvement of parents/carers

4.6 Schools have welcomed the availability of this funding without the need for an EHCP and also the fact that it is available to children on the autism pathway (waiting for assessment / possible diagnosis by CAMHs) as well as to children with a diagnosis, given the very long waiting times for assessment.

4.7 The objectives of creating the fund were:

- Reduce levels of EBSA (where applicable)
- Reduce anxiety
- Support children to learn skills to better manage their anxiety
- Improve staff knowledge of suitable interventions and resources to support autistic pupils
- Increase the child's level of engagement in learning and school attendance
- Increase engagement with professionals and education
- Supporting schools to keep more complex pupils in mainstream

4.8 In 2021-22 the funding supported 41 pupils in 22 schools (2 secondary schools and 20 primary schools).

4.9 The attached report (Appendix One) sets out how the funding was used and provides a number of case studies demonstrating impact, with feedback in the schools' own words.

4.10 It can be seen from the case studies that schools were creative in their use of funding, and whilst some was used for TA support for the child, in many cases the funding was used in a broader range of ways including social skills groups; the purchase of resources to implement specific techniques and approaches; on line learning; access to types of support such as mindfulness and also facilitation of joint working, for example, in one case, a member of school staff working alongside a clinical psychologist. In some cases parents were included in the work being done with the child, so there was also a knock on effect on the parents' ability to manage their child at home.

4.11 The case studies in the attached report demonstrate a number of positive outcomes for children who were supported, including:

- Children who struggle with relationships forming new friendships
- Children learning better collaboration skills
- Improved attendance; for one child the trigger for this was the social skills group funded from the Autism Fund
- Improved learning skills and ability to access the curriculum; in one case a child had not even been attempting work but through support produced enough work for the school to be able to properly assess him for the first time
- One young person achieved GCSE Maths, partly as a result of accessing on line learning through the Autism Fund
- Children showing reduced anxiety and learning strategies to manage their anxiety, which avoided them becoming dysregulated
- Children being given an insight in to their autism
- Reduced number of behavioural incidents in school
- Parents less anxious about their child and more confident about using strategies at home

4.12 In all cases, the objectives of the project (see 4.7) were met, other than those which were not relevant, eg. improved attendance would not be relevant as an objective for all children supported.

4.13 In addition, risks which had been identified by the schools at the time funding was requested were considered at the end of the intervention to consider whether risks were avoided. None of the children supported through the Autism Fund became EBSA or were excluded. 4 of the pupils supported had already been identified as needing specialist placements at the time funding was allocated and were waiting for placements to become available. The additional funding enabled them to have better access to the curriculum in the interim period than would otherwise have been possible. The other 5 children are continuing to have their needs met in their mainstream schools. Specialist placements for children with autism who also display challenging behaviours when dysregulated are now costing approximately **£80,000** per child per year, so cost avoidance is potentially very significant. It cannot be assumed on the basis of a relatively short intervention that none of these children will in future need a specialist placement. However, impact reports from schools indicate that in each case there has been an identifiable shift, not just in the child's presentation, but also in how the child is being supported by the school on a longer term basis, so the chances of retaining the child in mainstream school are certainly higher than they would have been without the intervention. Schools were all asked to consider how

they would make interventions put in place sustainable, as funding is only designed to be short term, and most were able to say how this would happen

## 5. EBSA Fund & EBSA Posts (2021-22) Impact

5.1 The allocation for this initiative was **£110,657** in 2021-22 to support pupils at risk of poorer long term outcomes due to experiencing emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA). This allocation was split into two parts i) £54,500 to appoint 3 part time EBSA posts to offer specialist support to schools, pupils and families and ii) £56,157\* as an EBSA Fund for schools to implement interventions directly to support specific pupils.

5.2 One secondary school chose to contribute their share of the funding distributed to secondary schools (£11,065 per school) to the project, which increased the EBSA fund to \*£67,222.

5.3 The objectives of the funding were to:

- reduce rates of persistent absence due to school anxiety
- increase pupil attendance
- reduce the number of EBSA pupils moving to alternative provision

5.4 To access the EBSA Team and/or EBSA Fund, schools are required to make a referral into a multi-disciplinary panel (EBSA Forum) chaired by the Principal Educational Psychologist & Service Manager: Mental Health & Wellbeing and attended by representatives from: the SEN Team, the Education Welfare Service, the Children in Care team, the Autism Team, the Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST), the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). This panel considers requests for both the EBSA Fund and EBSA Team support. As part of the referral process, schools must demonstrate the school support and progress to date.

5.5 Due to the complex and sometimes entrenched nature of EBSA difficulties, the main drivers of school referrals have been varied. Principally, schools cited anxiety (general and separation) and family-related factors as the main drivers for persistent school absence along with other pupil, home and school based factors.

5.6 Across the year, 25 referrals were made into the EBSA Forum from 13 schools. Almost 90% of referrals were for pupils at EBSA Level 3 (still in school but showing patterns of non-attendance) and EBSA Level 4 (no longer attending school) whom had been out of school for a significant period of time. It is acknowledged that the longer a pupil has been out of school, the longer it will take to re-integrate them back into school. It is possible that the majority of referrals were Level 3 and 4 as prior to establishing the EBSA Forum, schools were not able to access specialist support.

5.7 In addition, approximately 60% of referrals were identified as having or as likely to have special educational needs (SEN) and 24% either had an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or had submitted a referral for a needs assessment. Just less than half (48%) had either a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or were awaiting assessment and a further three pupils were awaiting assessments on the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Anxiety and Depression pathways.

5.8 Four schools applied for EBSA Funds to support six pupils with their individual EBSA needs. These requests included a range of support types e.g. transport to get to/from school, TA support at key times of the day and support to meet other needs/increase pupil engagement. The total cost for EBSA Fund support was £12,098.36.

5.9 All other EBSA referrals were considered by the EBSA Forum and support was assigned to the EBSA Team. Initial support was offered from the EBSA Co-ordinator then the EBSA EP and EBSA MHW worked with the school, parents and pupil to firstly understand the situation before putting in place bespoke interventions. This often included a combination of home/school visits, assessments, psychoeducation, therapy and practical support. The team were innovative and creative in their approach and AV1s (telepresence robots) were also used by five pupils (four schools). These are robots that enable a pupil to interact with the classroom remotely. The AV1 sits in the classroom, whilst the pupil operates the AV1 from another room in school or home via their smart phone/tablet.



**AV1 robot**

5.9 The attached report (Appendix B) documents the support offered to schools and provides information demonstrating outcomes and impact, with feedback from schools, pupils and parents.

5.10 It can be seen from the report that the objectives of the project (see 5.3) were met.

5.11 It should be acknowledged that in many cases, the EBSA situations were far more complex than had been previously understood. Reasons for this included:

- Relationship break down between school/home
- Schools/parents expecting/needing a rapid, emergency response/service from the EBSA Team
- Long term entrenched school avoidance behaviours i.e. the pupil having been out of school (Level 4) for a long period of time
- Schools not being supportive of the pupil's return to school
- Parents not being supportive of the pupil's return to school

5.12 Despite these challenges, the report demonstrates a number of positive outcomes for children who received EBSA support, including:

- attendance increased for 61.5% EBSA cases
- the EBSA Level reduced for 46% EBSA cases
- the attendance level rose to over 90% for 15% EBSA cases
- engagement in learning increased for 54% EBSA cases
- school anxiety reduced for 54% cases

5.13 There are of course additional short term benefits that are not able to be measured quantitatively; however, have a significant impact upon long term pupil outcomes e.g.

- the pupil being able to trust a professional and talk about their difficulties for the first time
- reduced parental anxiety
- improved family functioning
- improvements in the pupil's level of confidence
- the pupil being better able to take part in daily activities e.g. have a hair cut
- the pupil having improved social skills/engagement e.g. being able to travel independently by train, engage with a tutor

5.14 Due to the complexity of EBSA cases, especially the time taken to build trust, the need for collaborative working with schools and families and the need to try a range of approaches before finding out 'what works' for each pupil, it can be difficult to quantify the financial impact of EBSA involvement. However, a **cost saving of approximately £138,657** has been estimated based upon a reduction in the time needed to support these pupils and a reduced need for alternative placements for eight pupils.

5.15 Whilst difficult to quantify, the longer term benefits of supporting pupils back into school cannot be under-estimated and short term benefits have already been seen for both pupils and families.

5.16 Feedback from schools and families has been positive and the EBSA support welcomed. There is a need for further future work to ensure that schools are better equipped in their knowledge, awareness and understanding of EBSA, and to ensure earlier identification of difficulties. There will also be a need for continued support for more complex and entrenched EBSA cases.

## 6 EBSA Funding allocated to secondary schools

6.1 As stated above, secondary schools have been allocated funding to support young people who are EBSA. The schools have been asked to give feedback on the impact of this funding. Responses from Trinity, Little Heath and St. Bart's are attached.

## 7 Options for Consideration

6.1 Cease funding both projects at the end of 22-23

6.2 Continue funding both projects for one further year for 2023-24, pending further evaluation.

6.3 Confirm permanent funding for both projects as part of the HNB budget from 2023-24.

## 7. Proposals

7.1 That both projects are permanently funded through the HNB given their impact on outcomes for children and the current and future potential for cost avoidance on the HNB.

## 8 Conclusion

8.1 Both projects have demonstrated a positive impact, including cost avoidance, which is disproportionate to the relatively low level of investment. The HFG is therefore asked to consider ongoing funding for both projects from the HNB.

## **9 Consultation and Engagement**

Michelle Sancho, Karen Bartlett, Jackie Smith

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

- a. Appendix A – Autism Fund Impact report
- b. Appendix B – EBSA Fund Impact report
- c. Appendix C – Trinity EBSA Impact report
- d. Appendix D – Little Heath EBSA Impact report
- e. Appendix E – St. Bartholomew's EBSA Impact Report

# Appendix A

## Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), which states:

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
  - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:
    - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;*
    - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;**
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.**
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.*
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.*

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality (the relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected, but on the significance of the impact on them):

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the Council?



Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Schools' Forum to make:	N/A
Name of Service/Directorate:	Education
Name of assessor:	Jane Seymour
Date of assessment:	29.11.22

Is this a .... ?		Is this policy, strategy, function or service ... ?	
Policy	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	New or proposed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> xNo <input type="checkbox"/>
Function	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> x No <input type="checkbox"/>	Is changing	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Service	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

<b>(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?</b>	
<b>Aims:</b>	To support children with autism and children who do not attend school due to anxiety (emotionally based school avoidance) to be able to access education and have their needs met
<b>Objectives:</b>	
<b>Outcomes:</b>	Children with autism who access the Autism Fund will have their needs more effectively met in their mainstream school  Children who are EBSA will have improved attendance and better educational outcomes
<b>Benefits:</b>	

<b>(2) Which groups might be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?</b>			
<i>(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation)</i>			
<b>Group Affected</b>	<b>Potential Positive Impacts</b>	<b>Potential Negative Impacts</b>	<b>Evidence</b>

Age			
Disability	<p>Children with autism will have access to additional support as additional resources will be available to schools</p> <p>Children who are EBSA will have support with their anxiety and emotional needs so that they are able to attend school on a more regular basis</p>	<b>None</b>	
Gender Reassignment			
Marriage and Civil Partnership			
Pregnancy and Maternity			
Race			
Religion or Belief			
Sex			
Sexual Orientation			
<b>Further Comments:</b>			

<b>(3) Result</b>	
<b>Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please provide an explanation for your answer:</b>	
See above	
<b>Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

**Please provide an explanation for your answer:**

See above

**If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a EqlA 2.**

**If an EqlA 2 is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the EqlA guidance and template – <http://intranet/index.aspx?articleid=32255>.**

<b>(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:</b>	
<b>EqlA Stage 2 required</b>	<b>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
<b>Owner of EqlA Stage Two:</b>	
<b>Timescale for EqlA Stage Two:</b>	

**Name: Jane Seymour**

**Date: 29.11.22**

**Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality and Diversity Officer ([pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk)), for publicatio**