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# High Needs Block (HNB) Budget 2025/26

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**Report being considered by:** Schools' Forum  
**Date of Meeting:** 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024  
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**Item for:** Discussion **By:** All Forum Members

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide information on the proposed 2025-26 HNB budget.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 To note and provide feedback on the HNB budget for 2025-26.

2.2 To include the current, Invest to Save initiatives and non-statutory services in the HNB budget currently, with the caveat that their continuation will be reviewed as part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. These projects include:

- 0.4 post in the Early Development and Inclusion Team
- 1 FTE SEMH post
- £90,000 to maintain I-College placements

## 3. Introduction/Background

3.1 Setting a balanced budget for the High Needs Block remains a major challenge due to the rising number of high needs pupils and increasing unit costs, while place funding has remained static. The number of children with EHCPs continues to grow significantly, despite consistent thresholds being applied. The total number of EHCPs in January 2024 was 1534 compared to 971 in 2019, an increase of 58% in five years. The data below is taken from the SEN 2 returns which is published in January each year but reports on the year prior. For context, the current number of EHCPs in West Berkshire is 1668.

Year	WBC EHCP Total	% increase from 2019	National EHCP Total	% increase from 2019
2018	971	-	353,995	-
2019	1034	6.5%	390,109	10%
2020	1074	10.61%	430,697	22%
2021	1198	23.4%	473,255	34%
2022	1322	36%	517,049	46%
2023	1532	58%	575,963	63%

- 3.2 4.7% of children and young people in West Berkshire had an EHCP in 2023, up from 4.5% in 2022. This is higher than the national average (4.3%) and when compared to the Southeast (4.6%) and Statistical Neighbours (4.33%).
- 3.3 The demand for additional EHCPs has been intensified by the Covid pandemic which caused some children to fall further behind, leading to an increase in EHCP requests. Additionally, the pandemic has also exacerbated a pre-existing issue with rising incidence of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).
- 3.4 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. A decision was made to set a deficit budget for the first time in 2016/17 and the budget has continued to be overspent each year since that time. The table below sets out the deficit HNB budgets set over the last 9 years:

<b>Financial year</b>	<b>HNB Allocation</b>	<b>Block transfer</b>	<b>Total HNB Deficit Budget set</b>	<b>Difference between budget set and HNB allocation</b>
<b>16/17</b>	-18,118,428	-858,000	21,584,180	2,607,752
<b>17/18</b>	-20,056,233	0	20,312,740	256,507
<b>18/19</b>	-19,958,537	27,000	20,041,180	109,643
<b>19/20</b>	-20,100,067	0	21,748,000	1,647,933
<b>20/21</b>	-21,691,304	-263,285	23,114,920	1,160,331
<b>21/22</b>	-23,631,318	-548,568	25,479,384	1,299,498
<b>22/23</b>	-26,282,076	-300,166	28,241,087	1,658,845
<b>23/24</b>	-28,495,697	0	31,587,958	3,092,261
<b>24/25</b>	-29,153,266	-335,047	37,408,701	7,920,388

- 3.5 Pressure on the High Needs Block is a national issue, with many local authorities having significant overspends and setting deficit budgets. The 35 Local Authorities with the highest level of overspend are now part of the Government's Safety Valve Programme. While another 55 Local Authorities participate in the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme. There are three tranches to this programme; West Berkshire is in the third tranche.
- 3.6 The Local Authority's statutory duties for children with SEND are effectively open ended in that if a child requires an EHC Plan it must be provided regardless of budgetary constraints. Criteria for initiating an Education, Health and Care assessment are robustly applied by the SEN Panel (which has Headteacher representation). However, despite robust management of demand, the number of children with EHCPs continues to rise. The total number of EHCPs in January 2024 is 1534 compared to 972 in 2019, a rise of 58% in five years. The current number of EHCPs is 1668. The increase in EHCPs is largely concentrated in specialist placements rather than mainstream schools, which is the main factor driving budget pressure in the High Needs Block

- 3.7 The creation of more local provision for children with SEMH and autism has alleviated some pressures, as local maintained provision is more cost effective than independent and non-maintained provision. The Castle@Theale provision has twenty-four children on roll, rising to thirty by September 2025 and to its full capacity of forty-two by 2027. Every one of these children would have needed to be placed in a non-maintained or independent special school. The new Kennet Valley SEMH/Autism provision opened in September 2024 with six children, rising to twelve by 2025. It is expected that a further twelve place primary SEMH provision in the west of the Authority will be established as a matter of urgency based upon identified need. A sufficiency strategy has now been completed as part of the DBV programme and this will guide further investment in additional capacity.
- 3.8 It is critical that mainstream schools receive support to maintain more children with SEND in mainstream settings. This includes children with SEMH and autism. There has been some success in avoiding specialist placements through initiatives such as Therapeutic Thinking, the enhancement of the Autism Team and the creation of an EBSA Team. The refreshed SEND Strategy for 2024-29 is proposing further measures to increase capacity in mainstream schools, the DBV Programme will include initiatives to support inclusive practice in mainstream schools. (See Appendix B)
- 3.9 Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Appendix A show where the predicted 2025-26 costs exceed 2024-25 budgets.
- 3.10 Based on currently available data, the current position on the HNB budget for 2024-25 and 2025-26 is set out in the table below. In summary, the total budget needed in 2025-26 is **£42,984,862**. The in year overspend is predicted to be **£12,956,998** and the total cumulative overspend will be **£29,048,691**.

Cost Centre	Description	Proposed Budget 2025/26
90539	Special Schools Maintained	6,465,770
90548	Non WBC special schools	301,200
90554	Non WBC free schools	481,870
90617	Resource Units Maintained	696,400
90026	Resource Units Academies	1,297,350
90618	Resource Units Non WBC	43,720
90621	Mainstream Maintained	2,039,520
90622	Mainstream Academies	1,199,630
90624	Mainstream Non WBC	103,350
90575	Non Maintained Special Schools	1,397,600
90579	Independent Special Schools	10,925,660
90580	Further Education	1,508,950
90627	Disproportionate HN Pupils	200,000
90556	New SEMH Provision at Theale	1,728,060
90557	Kennet Valley Resource Base	560,400
90625	PRU Top Up Funding	1,196,370
90628	PRU EHCP SEMH Placements	1,098,090
	<b>High Needs Block: Top Up Funding Total</b>	<b>31,243,940</b>
90540	Special Schools	3,410,000
90546	Special Schools - Place Funding Post 16	790,000

90584	Resourced Units - Place Funding	304,000
90552	Special Schools and PRU Teachers Pay and Pension	339,170
Top Slice	Resource Units Academies – pre16	564,000
90551	Mainstream Maintained - post 16 SEN places	48,000
Top Slice	Mainstream Academies – post 16	60,000
Top Slice	Further Education	678,000
90320	Pupil Referral Units	860,000
	<b>High Needs Block: Place Funding Total</b>	<b>7,053,170</b>
90240	Applied Behaviour Analysis	392,080
90290	Sensory Impairment	251,220
90577	SEN Commissioned Provision	700,640
90565	Equipment for SEN Pupils	20,000
90295	Therapy Services	614,680
90288	Elective home Education Monitoring	61,640
90282	Medical Home Tuition	391,500
90610	Hospital Tuition	36,180
90281	SEND Strategy (DSG)	74,010
90237	Alternative Provision Co-ordinator	42,640
90555	Language and Literacy Centres LALs	183,920
90585	Specialist Inclusion Support Service	50,000
90582	PRU Outreach Service	61,200
90280	Cognitive and Learning Team	388,830
90830	ASD Advisory Service	314,280
90372	Therapeutic Thinking	74,480
90961	Vulnerable Children	179,400
90287	Early Development and Inclusion Team	107,900
90581	Dingley's Promise	125,000
90373	Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)(WBC Led)	142,460
90237	Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) (school led)	110,960
90237	Transition project - part funded DBV	46,310
90374	SEMH Practitioner	53,350
	Invest to save - i-college	90,000
	<b>High Needs Block: Non Top Up or Place Funding</b>	<b>4,512,680</b>
	SSR	175,072
	<b>High Needs Block Total</b>	<b>42,984,862</b>

The impact of the additional resources allocated in the recent budget have not been included, and any transfer between High Needs and School's Block will reduce the projected deficit.

The increase in the estimated budget requirement for 25-26 relates mainly to the following costs:

- Independent and non-maintained school placements – increased budget requirement of **£3,510,300**
- Special School top ups - increased budget requirement of **£247,431**

- Mainstream EHCP top ups – increased budget requirement of **£275,650**
- Castle@Theale planned increase in numbers in 2024 – increased budget requirement of **£277,179**
- Kennet Valley SEMH resource planned increase in numbers for 2025 – increased budget requirement of **£140,590**
- PRU - increased budget requirement of - **£109,260**

3.11 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. Proposals

4.1 To consider and comment on the HNB budget for 2025-26 including the breakdown by cost centre as set out in Appendix A.

4.2 To continue to monitor and scrutinise the HNB overspend through regular meetings of the Heads Funding Group.

## 5. Conclusion

6.1 The HNB continues to be under considerable pressure for the reasons set out in this report, due to increased demand for independent and non-maintained special school placements and increased EHCPs in mainstream schools. The DBV programme will reduce the rate at which HNB spend is increasing but will not bring it in line with the HNB budget. Further work is currently being undertaken to identify ways in which spend can be brought in line with the budget by 2028. In the interim, the HFG / Schools Forum is asked to consider the deficit HNB budget as set out in this report.

## 6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix A - High Needs Budget Detail

6.2 Appendix B - Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme Update

6.3 Appendix C - Historical Data

## Appendix A

### High Needs Budget Detail

#### 1. PLACE FUNDING – STATUTORY

- 1.1 Place funding is determined by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and has to be passed on to the institution, forming their base budget. Academy and FE 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).
- 1.2 The ESFA will not fund any overall increases to places. If additional places are needed in academies or FE colleges, a request can be made to the ESFA. However, any additional places agreed would be top sliced from West Berkshire’s HNB allocation; no additional funding is made available.
- 1.3 As it is not possible to request increased planned place funding for maintained schools, any increase in place funding needed which is over and above the number of places set out below would need to be allocated to the relevant top up budgets, creating additional pressure on those budgets. The actual numbers on roll at The Castle and Brookfields Schools (including children from other Local Authorities) are 199 and 221 respectively (rising to 224 in Jan 2025), a total of 420.

TABLE 1 - Place Funding Budget	2024/25 Budget			2025/26 Estimated Budget		
	No. of Places	£	Current No. of Pupils	Proposed No. of Places	£	Difference in number
Special Schools - pre 16	286	2,860,000	420	344	3,410,000	58
Special Schools – post 16	79	790,000		79	790,000	0
Resource Units Maintained – pre 16	35	234,000	33	47	304,000	12
Special Schools and PRU Teachers Pay and Pension		332,520		0	339,170	0
Resource Units Academies – pre 16 (DSG top slice)	97	610,000	93	94	564,000	-3
Mainstream Maintained post 16	6	36,000	16	8	48,000	2
Mainstream Academies – post 16 (DSG top slice)	27	162,000	10	7	60,000	-20
Further Education	129	774,000	113	113	678,000	-16
PRU Place Funding (90320)	66	660,000	90	86	860,000	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>6,458,520</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>7,053,170</b>	<b>53</b>

## 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 2024/25 and the estimate for 2025/26.

<b>TABLE 2</b>	<b>2024/25 Budget</b>			<b>2025/26</b>	
<b>Top Up Budgets</b>	<b>Budget £</b>	<b>Forecast £ (Month 7)</b>	<b>Over/(under) £</b>	<b>Estimate £</b>	<b>Difference 24/25 budget &amp; 25/26 prediction</b>
Special Schools Maintained (90539)	6,218,340	5,965,800	-252,540	6,465,770	247,430
Non WBC special schools (90548)	215,295	352,730	137,435	301,200	85,905
Non WBC free schools (90554)	618,120	643,960	25,840	481,870	-136,250
Resource Units Maintained (90617)	676,120	676,120	0	696,400	20,280
Resource Units Academies (90026)	1,259,558	1,218,850	-40,708	1,297,350	37,792
Resource Units Non WBC (90618)	105,638	60,430	-45,208	43,720	-61,918
Mainstream Maintained (90621)	1,821,000	1,937,070	116,070	2,039,520	218,520
Mainstream Academies (90622)	1,142,500	1,142,500	0	1,199,630	57,130
Mainstream Non WBC (90624)	140,385	137,800	-2,585	103,350	-37,035
Non Maintained Special Schools (90575)	1,423,548	1,276,440	-147,108	1,397,600	-25,948
Independent Special Schools (90579)	7,389,412	8,151,970	762,558	10,925,660	3,536,248
Further Education (90580)	1,465,000	1,276,790	-188,210	1,508,950	43,950
Disproportionate HN Pupils (90627)	150,000	190,000	40,000	200,000	50,000
New SEMH Provision at Theale	1,450,880	1,450,880	0	1,728,060	277,180
Kennet Valley Resource Base	419,810	419,810	0	560,400	140,590
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24,495,606</b>	<b>24,901,150</b>	<b>405,544</b>	<b>28,949,480</b>	<b>4,453,874</b>

## 2.2 **Maintained Special Schools**

There will be an increase in costs of £247,431 this is due to the expansion of provision at The Castle School which is due to open in Autumn 2025.

## 2.3 **Non West Berkshire Special Schools**

There is an increase in costs due to an increase in pupils attending special schools in neighbouring local authorities.

## 2.4 **Non West Berkshire Free Schools**

The free special schools used by West Berkshire Council are primarily schools for children with autism. These schools tend to be used for children whose needs cannot be met by our own resourced ASD provision in mainstream schools. There is a significant saving in this budget as a number of young people are due to leave their Free school at the end of year 11 in July 2025.

## 2.5 **Resource Budgets (Academies/Maintained and Non West Berkshire)**

As part of the DBV programme a sufficiency plan is being created to increase the range of provision across West Berkshire, to ensure that current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND are met locally, whilst allowing flexibility for adapting to changing demands. This will lead to increases in these budgets over time. For 25-26 there are small variations to the Academies/Maintained and Non West Berkshire resource units budgets this is due to moves for specific children.

## 2.6 **Mainstream top ups (maintained and academies)**

Due to pressures on the HNB, the value of EHCP funding bands for children in mainstream schools has not been increased for several years. This has resulted in a situation whereby the funding no longer delivers the level of support it should deliver and schools either have to supplement the funding from their own budgets or children receive less support than they should. This is increasingly being raised as a concern by Headteachers and parents This is being addressed via the SEND banding review outlined in appendix B. Due to the increasing number of pupils in mainstream school with an EHCP an increase in both budgets is recommended

## 2.7 **Independent special schools and non-maintained special schools**

The demand for independent and non-maintained school placements for children with autism and SEMH continues to rise. There is a national shortage of placements of this type which has meant that we have had several children waiting for placements for some time. Four independent schools for children with these needs have opened in the West Berkshire area: Mile House, The Grange, Haywards Farm including (Northcroft school) and Oaklands. This has meant that children who had already been waiting for a place, or who would previously have had to wait for a place, have all been offered placements, which is positive in terms of meeting those children's needs, but has had a significant impact on the budget. Another issue affecting this budget is the shortage of places at The Castle and Brookfields schools. Most children waiting for a place remain in their mainstream schools, but in some cases, it has been necessary to place children in non-maintained or independent special schools. An additional factor is the high level of fee increases on independent and non-maintained specialist placements.



The predictions of cost for specialist placements in 2025-26 take in to account existing pupils, additional 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 2025-26. To account for this unpredictability, we have built in a percentage increase into the cost of these placements based on EHC plan trends over the last 3 years.

Due to the number of placements made over 24/25 and the continued demand for highly specialist placements the independent school budget is overspent and this is reflected in the budget forecast for next year.

## 2.8 Further Education

The costs of FE placements for students with SEND in 2025-26 are estimated for budgeting purposes as further education providers only finalise their placement offers in October 2024. Therefore, an assumption was made that numbers of young people with EHCPs moving in to or remaining at college would reflect patterns in previous years.

## 2.9 Castle@Theale Secondary SEMH Provision

Castle@Theale costs will increase in 2025-26 as a further six pupils will be admitted. However, the provision is very cost effective compared to alternatives in the independent sector and unit costs are continuing to reduce as the provision fills up.

## 2.10 Kennet Valley SEMH Provision

Kennet Valley costs will increase in 2025-26 as a further six pupils will be admitted. However, the provision is very cost effective compared to alternatives in the independent sector

## 3 PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (PRU) – STATUTORY asked for 31/10/2024

3.8 **Table 3** shows the budgets for PRU top ups.

TABLE 3 PRU Budgets	2024/25 Budget			2025/26	
	Budget £	Forecast £ (Month 7)	Over/(under) £	Estimate £	Difference 24/25 budget & 25/26 prediction
PRU Top Up Funding (90625)	1,139,400	1,139,400	0	1,196,370	56,970
PRU EHCP SEMH Placements (90628)	1,045,800	1,045,800	0	1,098,090	52,290
Non WBC PRU Top Up Funding (90626)	0	0	0		0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,185,200</b>	<b>2,185,200</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,294,460</b>	<b>109,260</b>

3.9 The current year budget was based on the previous year's forecast. Schools Forum agreed to a 50% contribution from schools for pupils that they placed. Heads have requested that this contribution remains. Permanent exclusions are funded 100% by the High Needs Block less the average pupil led funding contribution recovered from schools. The estimate for 25/26 PRU Top Up Funding is based on the profile of pupils at iCollege in the summer term.

3.10 The estimate forecast is based on this year's current project plus 3%.

3.11 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 if they are not able to remain in their mainstream schools. A new provision for pupils with EHCPs was set up in autumn 2019, The Pod, and a further Pod Plus provision was set up in September 2021. These placements are usually more cost effective than independent and non-maintained special school placements.

3.12 A request for additional funding to increase the number of places available at iCollege was agreed by School Funding Forum for financial year 2023-24, this included extending provision at Pod Plus to eighteen at the Parson Down Infant site. In addition, twelve places for an intervention provision for Year 7 & 8 students at The Moorside Centre was agreed. Unfortunately, as premises were unable to be agreed in time for staff recruitment this provision was unable to start until April 2024.

#### 4 OTHER STATUTORY SERVICES

Table 4 details the budgets for other statutory services.

TABLE 4		2024/25 Budget		2025/26	
Other Statutory Services	Budget £	Forecast £ (Month 7)	Over/(under) £	Estimate £	Difference 24/25 budget & 25/26 prediction
Applied Behaviour Analysis (90240)	270,420	380,660	110,240	392,080	121,660
Sensory Impairment (90290)	296,460	253,380	-43,080	251,217	-45,243
SEN Commissioned Provision (90577)	650,830	680,040	29,210	700,642	49,812
Equipment for SEN Pupils (90565)	15,000	15,000	0	20,000	5,000
Therapy Services (90295)	526,080	534,910	8,830	614,682	88,602
Elective home Education Monitoring (90288)	49,480	41,800	-7,680	61,640	12,160
Medical Home Tuition (90282)	381,690	329,800	-51,890	391,500	9,810
Hospital Tuition (90610)	36,180	18,090	-18,090	36,180	0

SEND Strategy (DSG) (90281)	69,230	69,230	0	74,010	4,780
Alternative Provision Co-ordinator	39,540	39,540	0	42,640	3,100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,334,910</b>	<b>2,362,450</b>	<b>27,540</b>	<b>2,584,591</b>	<b>249,681</b>

#### 4.1 **Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) / Personal Budgets**

This budget historically supported a small number of children with EHC Plans for whom the Authority had agreed an ABA programme. ABA is an intensive intervention programme for children with autism which aims to modify their behaviours, in order to allow children to function more successfully in school and in society. There are now fewer ABA programmes funded and this budget (which will be renamed) supports the costs of children with EHC Plans accessing other bespoke packages where this is the most appropriate and cost-effective way of meeting their needs, including SEN Personal Budgets. This budget needs to increase due to increasing numbers of children with SEN Personal Budgets. However, it should be noted that SEN Personal Budgets can be a very cost-effective alternative to non maintained and independent special schools, in particular for children who are emotionally based school avoiders, for whom they are increasingly being requested by parents. This budget will be split over two separate cost centres.

4.2 **Sensory impairment** Support for children with hearing, visual and multi-sensory impairments is purchased from the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service (SCS). This includes support from qualified teachers of HI and VI, audiology and mobility support. This budget has a small saving due to decreasing numbers of pupils needing SCS support.

#### 4.3 **SEN Commissioned Provision (Engaging Potential)**

Engaging Potential is an independent special school commissioned to provide alternative educational packages for fourteen young people in Key Stage 4. Students placed at Engaging Potential are those who have 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. An in-year increase of approximately £33K was agreed to this contract in 22-23 due to costings not having been revised for some years. The contract ended in August 2023, with the option to extend for a further two years. The contract has been extended for two years at an increased cost of £651,899 per annum, reflecting the need for increased staff ratios and enhanced salaries to address retention and recruitment issues. Premises costs have been added to the contract cost. Even at the higher cost for 2024-25, the unit cost of a place at £48,279 represents good value for money compared to other independent schools for SEMH. This contract is going through the commissioning process to be renewed.

#### 4.4 **Equipment for SEN Pupils**

This budget is 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 budget of £10,000 would be made available to meet these needs. In 2019-20 it was agreed that the budget should be increased again to £15,000 as demand for equipment for children in nurseries and resourced schools was increasing. It is recommended that the budget increases to £20,000 and all mainstream schools are able to request funding for equipment over the cost of £500 as this has a very significant impact on school budgets especially for smaller primary schools.

#### **4.5 Therapy Services (Contract with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust)**

The therapy services budget covers the costs for children with SEND who have speech and language therapy, occupational therapy or physiotherapy written in to their EHC Plans as an educational need.

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. The service is commissioned from the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust.

The HFG / Schools Forum will be aware from previous reports that this service was retendered in April 2023 and is now jointly commissioned with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham District Council. This exercise resulted in an increase in cost due to higher numbers of children with therapies written in to their EHCPs as an educational need (in line with generally higher numbers of children with EHCPs), the need to provide therapies for The Castle@Theale and the need to provide capacity for therapists to assist the Local Authority in defending cases which go to the SEND Tribunal.

In addition, costs in this budget have risen because of the need to provide access to therapies in the new Westwood Farm SEND Resource and in the new SEMH Resource at Kennet Valley.

#### **4.6 Elective Home Education (EHE) Monitoring**

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to monitor Elective Home Education (EHE) arrangements made by parents and to ensure that all children are receiving a suitable education. Oversight of EHE monitoring falls under the Education Welfare and Safeguarding Service. Currently, the Elective Home Education Officer role is filled at 0.6 full-time equivalent (FTE). Budget has been allocated to expand this role to a full 1.0 FTE position; however, full recruitment to this role has been delayed due to the need for internal backfill of a substantive post.

#### **4.7 Medical Tuition Service**

The Medical Tuition Service (formerly known as the Home Tuition Service) is a statutory program dedicated to providing educational support, including in-home tuition, to students who are unable to attend school full-time due to medical conditions or illnesses. In the 2022-23 fiscal year, the program's budget was increased to ensure the Local Authority fulfils its obligations to children unable to attend school for health-related reasons. This year, savings have been realised due to recruitment delays. However, demand for this service continues to grow as it supports all pupils covered under Section 19 and responds to rising cases of mental health challenges among children and young people, compounded by extended waiting times for additional

support. The majority of referrals involve students facing ASD, anxiety, and other mental health barriers that hinder school attendance.

This year has focused on stabilising and enhancing the service through process improvements, expanding educational offerings, and fostering closer collaboration with schools to enhance educational support. Key developments include transitioning staff to permanent contracts and conducting a comprehensive review of emerging issues within Section 19 provision. This review will inform future decisions regarding referral pathways and support services, which may impact future budget requirements. While no immediate financial adjustments are anticipated, it remains premature to project future budgetary needs given the pending decisions on how best to fulfil statutory obligations.

The service places a particular emphasis on supporting students with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCP) and those with significant anxiety, including the co-ordination of EOTAS packages where there is no appropriate provision for a pupil. This work goes beyond traditional teaching, which is how the service has been established, to include critical skills in re-engagement, integration, and coordination of educational packages for EOTAS, areas that have previously been under-resourced within the team. To meet the wide-ranging needs of our students, we have now appointed a full-time qualified SENCO, providing the team with enhanced capabilities to support the broad spectrum of needs within the service. There will be a requirement for this area to be further developed and supported.

#### **4.8 Hospital Tuition**

The Local Authority is 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. As numbers and costs are impossible to predict, it is proposed that the 2025-26 budget remains the same as 2024-25.

#### **4.9 SEND Strategy Officer**

In 2019-20 the Schools Forum agreed to fund a SEND Strategy Officer for three years initially to support implementation of the SEND Strategy 2018-23. Agreement was given by the Schools Forum in October 2020 that this post could be made permanent in order to attract and retain candidates of a suitable calibre.

#### **4.10 Alternative Provision / EOTAS Coordinator**

It is proposed that an additional post of Alternative Provision / EOTAS Coordinator is funded in 25-26) in order to reduce pressure for specialist placements for children who have ceased attending school due to EBSA. Currently EBSA is a key driver of spend on independent specialist placements. This post would provide capacity to set up and oversee alternative packages of education where this is an appropriate alternative to a specialist placement. In many cases a package of support would meet with parental preference, potentially meet the child's needs better than a school placement and could be considerably more cost effective. The only current barrier to such arrangements is lack of capacity to organise packages and ensure they are suitably monitored. This post has been put on hold while all initiatives to support SEN students are reviewed by DBV.

## 5 NON-STATUTORY Services

5.1 **Table 5** details the non-statutory service budgets for 2024-25, predicted outturn, and estimates for 2025-26.

5.2 The table shows the budget for these services in 2025-26 assuming that the services continue and there are no changes to staffing levels. However, the effectiveness of non-statutory services is being considered as part of DBV and recommendations regarding non-statutory services will be made by DBV officers and members of the Heads Funding Group. Should decisions be made to reduce or cease any non-statutory services, the 2025-26 HNB budget will be adjusted accordingly.

5.3 Table 5 currently includes ongoing funding for the “invest to save” initiatives agreed in 2022-23 and rolled forward in to 2023-24 and 2024-25, for an additional 0.4 teacher in the EDIT Team, an additional SEMH practitioner and extra iCollege places. These projects will be considered as part of the review of non-statutory services.

TABLE 5 Non Statutory Services	2024/25 Budget			2025/26	
	Budget £	Forecast £ (Month 7)	Over/(under) £	Estimate £	Difference 24/25 budget & 25/26 prediction
Language and Literacy Centres LALs (90555)	171,840	171,840	0	183,920	12,080
Specialist Inclusion Support Service (90585)	50,000	50,000	0	50,000	0
PRU Outreach Service (90582)	61,200	61,200	0	61,200	0
Cognitive and Learning Team (90280)	363,830	342,500	-21,330	388,830	25,000
ASD Advisory Service (90830)	248,800	248,800	0	261,590	12,790
ASD Fund - Additional support	52,690	52,690	0	52,690	0
Therapeutic Thinking (90372)	69,330	58,130	-11,200	74,480	5,150
Vulnerable Children (90961)	50,000	0	-50,000	50,000	0
Vulnerable Children (90961)	129,400	119,400	-10,000	129,400	0
Early Development and Inclusion Team (90287)	68,950	68,950	0	75,920	6,970
Dingley's Promise (90581)	35,000	120,000	85,000	125,000	90,000
Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)(90373)	139,240	139,240	0	142,460	3,220
additional invest to save projects	110,966	110,960	-6	110,960	-6
Transition project - part funded DBV	0	0	0	46,310	46,310
Invest to save:					
0.4fte additional support EDIT team	28,190	4,440	-23,750	31,980	3,790

SEMH Practitioner	43,560	43,560	0	53,350	9,790
Extension of i-college	90,000	90,000	0	90,000	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,712,996</b>	<b>1,681,710</b>	<b>-31,286</b>	<b>1,928,090</b>	<b>215,094</b>

#### 5.4 Language and Literacy Centres (LALs)

The LALs provide forty-eight places per year for Year 5 students who have persistent difficulties with literacy and need an intensive programme delivered by a teacher qualified in specific literacy difficulties.

#### 5.5 Specialist Inclusion Support Service

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.

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

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 Cognition and Learning Team

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.

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

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.

#### 5.8 Autism Team

The Autism Team provides advice, support and training for mainstream schools on meeting the needs of children with Autism. The purpose of the service is to enable children with autism to be successfully included in mainstream schools wherever possible.

The context for this service is vastly increasing numbers of children with ASD diagnoses an Autism diagnosis and mainstream schools having 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 autism.

## 5.9 Vulnerable Children

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

The budget was gradually reduced from £120K over a number of years. This has always been a well-used resource that helps schools support vulnerable pupils with complex needs.

It was agreed in 2020-21 that this budget would be increased, as an invest to save initiative, in order to support the roll out of Therapeutic Thinking in West Berkshire schools. This increase was further extended in 2021-22 and 2022-23 and was agreed as a permanent addition to the HNB budget, along with the Therapeutic Thinking post.

## 5.10 Early Development and Inclusion Team

The service comprises of 1.8 teachers who are specialists in early years and SEND. Children under five who are identified by Health professionals as having significant SEND are referred to this service. Staff may visit children in their homes (if they are not yet in an early year setting) in order to promote their educational development and model strategies and resources for parents to use to support their child's progress.

Where capacity allows, 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.

The service has been reduced in size in recent years from 3.4 to 1.8 FTE. However, following additional resources (0.90 FTE) which is being funded by DBV, EDIT have been able to:

- Ensure all children go straight onto caseload
- Support transition from pre-school to school
- Provide targeted support and additional training for settings
- Provide support to parents and carers

An additional 0.4 post was agreed as an invest to save initiative in 2022-23 and carried forward to 2023-24. This was requested for 2024-25 but was replaced by the DBV funding detailed above. Ideally, a minimum of 0.4 days can be agreed as permanent extra hours to ensure EDIT can avoid having a waiting list. A permanent extension to EDIT hours of 0.9 FTE would mean a continuation of all the provision listed in 5.2.1 above.

## 5.11 Dingley's Promise

Dingley's Promise is a charitable organisation which provides registered early years education for children under five 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 years settings, where experience and expertise in SEND can vary greatly. Parents are able to take up their early years' 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.

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. 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.

Dingley's Promise has made a request for additional resources due to ongoing viability issues as a result of reduced charitable income and some large grants ending. Their annual running costs are £240,000 and they receive £100,000 in income from the Council including early years place funding, funding for one-to-one support for individual children and the £30,000 annual grant from the HNB. The balance of £140,000 has to come from fund raising. The organisation has reported reduced ability to achieve income through fund raising as well as an anticipated reduction in income in 2024-25 due to a large Children in Need grant ending. The West Berkshire centre is running at a loss and effectively being subsidised by centres in other areas.

It is therefore proposed that Dingley's Promise receive funding equivalent to special school bands for the children they support, this would be in an annual lump sum of £125,000. Dingley's Promise provides an essential service in West Berkshire for children under five with very complex needs. If the service ceased to be viable, there would be an increase in demand for maintained special school places, which are already in short supply, and there could be increased pressure for non-maintained / independent special school placements.

#### **5.12 Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)**

This support is divided into two separate pathways, a Local Authority led pathway for primary schools and school led provision for secondary schools. The aim of the EBSA team is to help schools reduce school-related anxiety, increase pupil attendance and/or their engagement in education, and to reduce the need for alternative provision.

#### **5.13 Transition Project**

As highlighted in the high needs block report at appendix B a Transitions Support Programme Pilot has been put in place by DBV. Additional funding to support this project is being requested from the HNB. More information will be available on this pilot via the DBV updates.

#### **5.14 Invest to Save projects**

Invest to Save projects in 2022-23, rolled forward to 2023-24, included a 0.4 FTE post in the EDIT Team, the early years training project, an SEMH practitioner and PRU places. This funding has continued and additional resources have been put in place via DBV. The effectiveness of these provisions will be reviewed as part of the DBV process.

These projects have been included in the budget but it is proposed that their continuation is considered as part of the review of funding of non-statutory services via DBV

## Appendix B

### Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme Update

1. West Berkshire was successful in its DBV grant bid and received £1 million funding, commencing in April 2024, to implement a one year SEND improvement programme.

The purpose of the Delivering Better Value Programme is to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability. Any significant impact on financial trajectories through the DBV programme are anticipated to be delivered from September 2025 and have a cumulative effect over the following years.

The West Berkshire DBV Programme consists of two workstreams.

- DBV Workstream 1 - Clear communications with families and wider local area partners to support access to services and the SEND system when they need it.
  - DBV Workstream 2 - Enabling settings, schools and colleges to meet the diverse needs of their communities locally including complex emotional and mental health needs of CYP.
  - The DBV Programme and its governance has become fully aligned and incorporated into the new [SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024 to 2029](#) to ensure the overarching delivery of the “Innovation in SEND” programme in West Berkshire.
2. The activities of the DBV workstreams are incorporated within the six priorities and enablers identified in the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, to be delivered between 2024 -2029.

Six priorities of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024 - 2029	Enablers identified in the SEND and Inclusion Strategy
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Early Years</li> <li>2. Early Intervention</li> <li>3. Inclusion</li> <li>4. Developing local specialist provision &amp; support</li> <li>5. Strengthening alternative provision and support</li> <li>6. Preparation for Adulthood</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop a digital strategy which enables us to collect, use &amp; share data more effectively; and to develop a digital dashboard enabling leaders’ effective oversight.</li> <li>• Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).</li> <li>• Develop a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND.</li> <li>• Work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.</li> <li>• Support the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that</li> </ul>

	<p>leaders can respond to the views of children &amp; young people and their families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children and young people.</li> <li>• Ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>DBV Workstream 1 – Objective:</b> Clear communications with families and wider local area partners to support access to services and the SEND system when they need it.</p> <p><b>Approach listed below:</b></p>	<p>What has been delivered in West Berkshire since April 2024</p>
<p>Mapping existing services across agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-agency gap analysis has been completed in relation to the Universal and Targeted Offer in conjunction with health colleagues – e.g. review of the support available around Autism, pre and post diagnosis. “A plan on a page” for available services will be published on the Local Offer.</li> <li>• Gaps in offers are being identified and will be commissioned or co-commissioned as necessary and the Local Offer updated.</li> </ul>
<p>GAP analysis</p>	
<p>Ensuring clear and current referral pathways are published for families &amp; service users. Update and refresh the Local Offer to ensure accessibility for service users</p>	
<p>Communications Plan to relaunch updates to Local Offer to families and service users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A SEND Strategic Communications Plan encompasses both work under the DBV Programme and the wider SEND and Inclusion Strategy under the collective strapline: “Innovation in SEND.”</li> <li>• An ‘Innovation in SEND’ blog / web page published to showcase updates</li> <li>• Parent Champion Coram Programme promoting engagement with families</li> <li>• A parent /carer survey of the Local Offer to inform a “refresh” of the Local Offer – “ You said/we did document” _ Nov 2024 Local Offer</li> </ul>
<p>Creating a digital dashboard to measure performance and inclusivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A public facing dashboard is being developed for the Local Offer (Dec 2024)</li> </ul>

<p><b>DBV Workstream 2 - Objective:</b> Enabling settings, schools and colleges to meet the diverse needs of their communities locally including complex emotional and mental health needs of CYP</p> <p><b>Approach listed below:</b></p>	<p>What has been delivered in West Berkshire since April 2024</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole School Mental Health Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A revised, evidenced based pilot Mental Health Project programme is underway led by the Virtual School Team who are working with ten schools. (October 2024- July 2025).</li> <li>• All mainstream schools will have access to an online learning platform to support Mental Health identification and good practice.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on supporting transitions into mainstream (Transitions Support Programme) to be led by schools and co-produced in clusters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitions Support Programme Pilot-Pupil level data has been reviewed to enable the identification of mainstream Year 6 pupils most likely to require additional support at transition. Targeted interventions will be available for these children to ensure as many as possible successfully transition into their secondary mainstream school – January 2025 -January 2026 – 50/50 funding DBV &amp; Schools.</li> <li>• West Berkshire Schools’ Guidance for a Successful Primary to Secondary Transition and Early Years to Reception will be published in October 2024.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking a banding review of unit costs of mainstream, maintained special and alternative provision to ensure parity and alignment with local and national funding arrangements.</li> <li>• Delivering a pilot of updated banding system and impact analysis if review supports this.</li> <li>• Reviewing the use of element 2 funding in schools and settings to promote targeted intervention at SEND support through early identification of need and timely access to appropriate resources, reducing the need for EHC assessments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 of a SEND funding review completed August 2024. Phase 2 underway, co-produced with schools. This will provide ;- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A shared understanding of the range and levels of needs across West Berkshire settings and schools and how that compares with other areas.</li> <li>➤ A clear and consistent graduated approach to meeting needs across the local area.</li> <li>➤ A transparent and equitable system of SEND funding and resource allocation across West Berkshire.</li> <li>➤ Identification and development of changes to the current SEND system.</li> <li>➤ Improvement in the quality and clarity of EHCPs.</li> <li>➤ Evidencing the impact of resourcing on children and young people’s outcomes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>DBV Workstream 2 - Objective:</b> Enabling settings, schools and colleges to meet the diverse needs of their communities locally including complex emotional and mental health needs of CYP</p> <p><b>Approach listed below: (contd.)</b></p>	<p>What has been delivered in West Berkshire since April 2024</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing decision making processes to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Decision making processes to be updated, where necessary, on the local offer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of statutory decision-making processes has been undertaken to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Any changes in process will be managed through consultation and updated on the local offer.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide additional capacity to pilot Annual Reviews for Year 5/6s to support Transitions Programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New quality assurance process for EHC plans and Annual review (Nov 2024 – Nov 2026) -Funded by WBC</li> <li>• Revision of Standard Operating procedures (SOPS) and Induction training for SEND Casework Team in data input under review</li> <li>• Additional resourcing to process transition Annual Reviews quickly to support Transitions Support Programme in place.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit schools' additional SEND training needs through surveys, focus groups and case studies to create a plan to meet gaps in existing SEND training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An audit of schools' training needs has been undertaken and an evaluation of impact of current LA support services is being completed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure existing SEN support teams work in a more coordinated way (e.g. Explore a single point of access to triage requests to sign post, monitor and moderate demand) to ensure early intervention.</li> <li>• Multi-disciplinary teams to support schools (Transitions Support Programme) e.g.</li> <li>• Increase the Early Development and Inclusion Team (EDIT) capacity.</li> <li>• Increase the Autism Team capacity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot Early Years Transitions Support Programme delivered from Summer Term 2024 supported Early Years transition into Foundation 2 – EYSENIT team</li> <li>• The Key Stage 2/3 Transitions Programme has been co-produced with schools (Primary and Secondary SENCOs and Year 7 teachers)</li> <li>• Additional ASD and SEMH support posts for transitions support pilot for year 5/6 pupils.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DBV Workstream 2 - Objective:</b> Enabling settings, schools and colleges to meet the diverse needs of their communities locally including complex emotional and mental health needs of CYP</p>	<p>What has been delivered in West Berkshire since April 2024</p>

Approach listed below: (contd.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring and supporting data analysis to inform development of sufficiency strategy.</li> <li>• <i>Enabler in SEND and Inclusion Strategy: - To develop a digital strategy which enables us to collect, use &amp; share data more effectively; and to develop a digital dashboard enabling leaders' effective oversight</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on SEND Data Management has informed the development of a Sufficiency Plan, data dashboards and a clearer financial overview.</li> <li>• West Berkshire <b>SEND Placement Sufficiency Analysis- 30 August 2024</b> is being ratified and will be published November 2024.</li> <li>• Paper to Corporate Board to be presented on Mitigation of Specialist Placements – 26/11/2024 with detailed proposals to develop SEND placement capacity and enhance the continuum of provision in West Berkshire.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing and updating of Strategic and Operational commissioning and procurement practices - include brokerage and contract management.</li> <li>• Stimulating markets, where necessary, to ensure appropriate and sufficient placement types are available for specialist and Alternative provision to meet current and anticipated demand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is now underway to establish a robust children's commissioning and brokerage function to ensure that children and young people gain access to the services that they need in a timely manner, as well as ensuring that the local authority can deliver value for money (November 2024-March 2025).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing individual high-cost placement packages to ensure they meet need and remain value for money.</li> <li>• Reviewing of funding arrangements on all placements - joint children's services piece of work across social care and education - led by strategic commissioner.</li> <li>• Piloting multi agency funding system for high-cost placements and reviewing all Joint funding/commissioning arrangements with social care and health.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A High-Cost Placement Review has been undertaken and is informing work around joint decision making in relation to Social Care, Education and Health Placements.</li> </ul>

### 3. Funding Review

As part of the work of DBV a review of SEND Funding is being undertaken. Phase 1 was a Desktop Review of funding arrangements during the Summer of 2024 and the report was circulated to schools in Sept 2024. Phase 2 of the SEND Funding Review has been initiated based on the recommendations from this report

A launch event for schools interested in finding out more was held on 7th October, and a number of schools from primary, secondary and special sectors have offered to become part of the Mainstream Schools working group. The first meeting of the working group was held 8th November, where the group will agree the way forward drawing on examples from other Local Authorities.

The Mainstream group is meeting monthly to develop and test the model and agree an implementation framework. Implementation is likely to be phased from September 2025, starting with new EHCPs.

The consultant who has been commissioned to support this work is also working with special schools to develop a simplified special school model and will be working with mainstream schools with designated units and resourced provisions to develop a simplified model to reflect that provision. Dependent on the progress of the work, this element will be implemented partially in 2025/2026 and inform budgets for 2026 / 2027.

### 3.1 The aims of the project are:

- Develop a fair, transparent and effective funding system for SEND that supports and enables:
  - The right provision / support being in place at the right time as locally as possible linked to evidenced needs
  - The identification and sharing of effective and best practice and enabling it to become common practice
  - Improved parent / carer confidence in West Berkshire's local provision
  - Efficient and effective use of funding / resources.
- The intended outcomes of the project are:
  - A shared understanding of the range and levels of SEND needs of pupils across West Berkshire's schools and how that compares with other areas.
  - A shared understanding of the range and levels of needs of children and young people who have an EHCP maintained by West Berkshire.
  - A shared understanding of the strengths, issues, next steps and all partners' role in improving the local system.
  - Identification of potential changes to the current system.
  - Identification of other actions required to support implementation of a new system, including improvement in the quality and clarity of EHCPs.
  - A transparent and equitable system of resource allocation across West Berkshire.

- Evidencing the impact of resourcing on children and young people's outcomes.
- Identification of workforce development priorities.
- Supporting specialist place planning.

The working group will report into the DBV task group who will feed into the SEND Strategic Improvement Board. The schools funding forum will be kept updated on the working group's progress.

#### 4. DBV Impact on HNB Spend

4.1 The revised deficit forecast for the HNB: -

HNB Deficit	Mitigated	Unmitigated
2024-2025	£15,766,217	£20,863,699

4.2 The mitigated cost avoidance has been achieved by: -

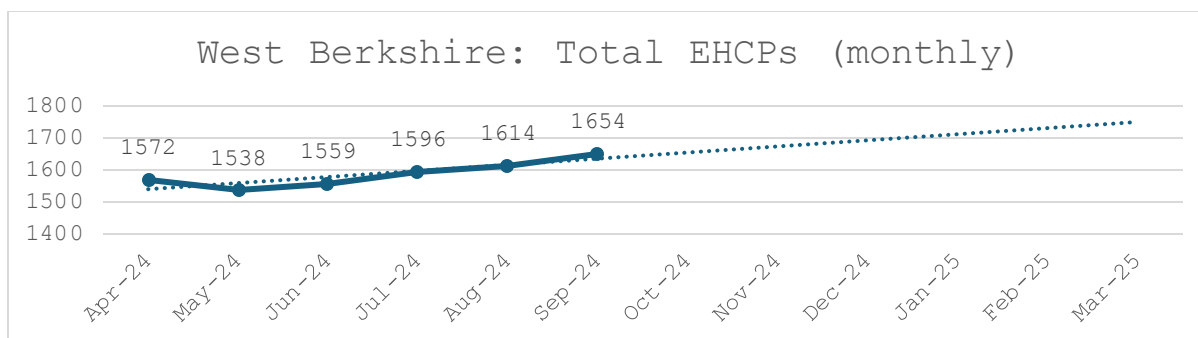
- Capacity Development in maintained specialist provision, reducing the demand for Independent non maintained school placements.
- £1.5 clawback from schools – 2023-2024.

4.3 It is anticipated in future years that a reduction in spend through the DBV programme will be achieved by; -

- More children's needs being met without EHCPs.
- More children with EHCPs having their needs met in mainstream schools.
- More children with EHCPs having their needs met in local maintained specialist provision rather than in independent and non-maintained special schools.
- Reduced unit costs of specialist placements achieved through commissioning and market management.

4.4 However, West Berkshire is currently maintaining approximately 1670 EHC plans (Oct 2024), and it is anticipated that this figure will continue to grow, even with the mitigations in place provided by the DBV Programme. These figures are in line with the trend we have seen throughout the financial year, with numbers expected to reach 1700 by December 2024. Nationally, the number of children and young people with EHC plans increased to 576,000, as at census day in January 2024, up by 11.4% from 2023. The number of EHC plans has increased each year since their introduction in 2014.





4.5 The anticipated mitigations through the DBV Programme, and additional mitigations identified will have an impact on the unmitigated forecast of the High Need Block.

	2025/26	2026/2027	2027/2028
DBV + additional mitigations savings	£8.2 million	£13.5 million	£19.3 million
Percentage of unmitigated deficit	16.8 %	16.47%	15.67%

The reduction in spend anticipated through the DBV Programme will be achieved through

- More children's needs being met without EHCPs
- More children with EHCPs having their needs met in mainstream schools
- More children with EHCPs having their needs met in local maintained specialist provision rather than in independent and non-maintained special schools.
- Reduced unit costs of specialist placements achieved through commissioning and market management.

The latest estimate of expenditure in the High Needs Block budget for both 2024/25 and 2025/6 is set out in Table 2. The figures are based on current and anticipated numbers of high needs pupils.

TABLE 1	2024/25 Budget £	2024/25 Forecast £	2025/26 Estimate £
Place Funding	6,458,520	6,458,520	7,053,170
Top Up Funding	24,495,610	24,901,150	28,949,480
PRU Funding (top ups only)	2,185,200	2,185,200	2,294,460
Other Statutory Services	2,334,910	2,362,450	2,584,590
Non Statutory Services	1,712,996	1,681,710	1,928,090
Support Service Recharges	213,480	173,697	175,072
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>37,400,716</b>	<b>37,762,727</b>	<b>42,984,862</b>
HNB DSG Allocation	-29,153,266	-29,153,266	-30,027,864
0.25% Schools Block Transfer	-335,047	-335,047	
Clawback from schools	0	-1,518,292	
In year overspend	7,912,403	6,756,122	12,956,998
HNB DSG Overspend from previous year	9,864,006	9,335,571	16,091,693
<b>Total cumulative deficit</b>	<b>17,776,409</b>	<b>16,091,693</b>	<b>29,048,691</b>

## Historical Data

<b>TABLE A</b>			
<b>Top Up Funding</b>	<b>2021/22 £</b>	<b>2022/23 £</b>	<b>2023/24 £</b>
Special Schools Maintained (90539)	4,985,051	5,233,228	5,676,186
Non WBC special schools (90548)	955,003	524,418	445,499
Non WBC free schools (90554)	0	535,617	660,692
Resource Units Maintained (90617)	321,587	317,407	655,772
Resource Units Academies (90026)	930,495	993,556	1,378,364
Resource Units Non WBC (90618)	207,271	131,516	95,738
Mainstream Maintained (90621)	974,686	1,182,597	1,687,494
Mainstream Academies (90622)	580,039	640,595	928,159
Mainstream Non WBC (90624)	174,581	169,046	152,115
Non Maintained Special Schools (90575)	851,541	875,863	1,092,852
Independent Special Schools (90579)	3,072,415	3,683,566	4,965,814
Further Education (90580)	1,175,012	1,149,072	1,628,914
Disproportionate HN Pupils (90627)	51,609	86,321	194,565
SEMH provision at Theale (90556)	0	765,987	986,986
SEMH provision at Theale (90556)	0	0	1,319
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,279,289</b>	<b>16,288,789</b>	<b>20,550,468</b>

<b>TABLE B</b>			
<b>PRU Funding</b>	<b>2021/22 £</b>	<b>2022/23 £</b>	<b>2023/24 £</b>
PRU Top Up Funding (90625)	861,561	902,512	959,950
PRU EHCP SEMH Placements (90628)	755,402	927,182	1,084,765
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,616,964</b>	<b>1,829,694</b>	<b>2,044,715</b>

<b>TABLE C</b>			
<b>Other Statutory Services</b>	<b>2021/22 £</b>	<b>2022/23 £</b>	<b>2023/24 £</b>
Applied Behaviour Analysis (90240)	196,912	246,773	335,102
Sensory Impairment (90290)	229,972	250,722	264,955
SEN Commissioned Provision (90577)	572,815	622,999	654,469

Equipment for SEN Pupils (90565)	8,090	16,231	-872
Therapy Services (90295)	335,164	329,133	490,251
Home Tuition (90315)	0	0	0
Elective home Education Monitoring (90288)	21,889	26,123	33,084
Medical Home Tuition (90282)	151,500	202,609	208,124
Hospital Tuition (90610)	53,847	34,000	5,055
SEND Strategy (DSG) (90281)	51,381	56,157	66,653
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,621,570</b>	<b>1,784,747</b>	<b>2,056,821</b>

<b>Table D Non Statutory Services</b>	<b>2021/22 £</b>	<b>2022/23 £</b>	<b>2023/24 £</b>
Language and Literacy Centres LALs (90555)	122,000	187,553	161,690
Specialist Inclusion Support Service (90585)	50,000	50,000	50,000
PRU Outreach Service (90582)	61,200	61,200	61,200
Cognitive and Learning Team (90280)	324,416	328,257	345,230
ASD Advisory Service (90830)	206,627	268,046	282,703
Vulnerable Children (90961)	168,232	178,980	112,558
Behaviour Programme (Invest to Save) (90370)	0	0	0
PPEP Care Programme (90371)	0	0	0
Early Development and Inclusion Team (90287)	57,817	86,663	91,294
Dingley's Promise (90581)	30,000	30,000	30,000
Therapeutic Thinking (90372)	53,272	52,457	30,986
Emotional Based School Avoiders (WBC managed)	65,623	123,879	105,075
Emotional Based School Avoiders (School managed)	99,585	99,864	111,199
Early Years Speech & Language (Invest to Save)	0	7,665	12,290
SEMH Practitioner (invest to save)	0	14,497	25,482
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,238,772</b>	<b>1,489,061</b>	<b>1,419,707</b>

<b>TABLE E</b>	<b>2021/22</b>			<b>2022/23</b>			<b>2023/24</b>		
<b>Place Funding</b>	<b>pupil numbers</b>	<b>planned places</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>pupil numbers</b>	<b>planned places</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>pupil numbers</b>	<b>planned places</b>	<b>£</b>
Special Schools – pre 16 (90540)	440	286	2,860,000	448	286	2,860,000	409	286	2,860,000
Special Schools – post 16 (90546)		79	790,000		79	790,000		79	790,000
Resource Units Maintained – pre 16 (90584)	31	35	226,000	32	35	222,000	33	35	238,000
Special Schools and PRU Teachers Pay & Pension			312,046			304,690			324,864
Mainstream Maintained post 16 (90551)	11	6	34,000	6	6	36,000	16	6	36,000
PRU Place Funding (90320)	84	66	660,000	72	66	660,000	72	66	660,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>4,882,046</b>			<b>4,872,690</b>			<b>4,908,864</b>