

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

8th March 2023

ITEM NO 4

BUDGET SETTING HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2023/24

Purpose of Report

1. To update Forum regarding the High Needs Block proposed budget for 2023/24.

Background

2. Schools Forum was notified at the January 2023 meeting that the Dedicated Schools Grant budget (DSG) allocation for the high needs block was £20,103,191 prior to recoupment of £4,366,000 for place funding. This figure will be updated for place change notification adjustments once known.
3. The funding equates to an increase (prior to recoupment) of £1,864,765. This includes the rolling in of additional funding for Special schools and alternative provision with the requirement to passport 3.4% of both the average top up costs and place funding. This has been factored into the budget setting document (appendix 2) and equates to £299,742 of the allocation.

High Needs Budget

4. The proposed budget is in line with the Debt Recovery plan, that has been submitted to the DFE for consideration to entry into the Safety Value programme. If we are successful the plan will be monitored against this base with the aim of achieving an in year balanced budget for 2023/24. If we are not accepted onto the programme this work will still need to be carried out as part of our overall debt recovery plan. With this in mind the budgets have been classified into the same categories as the plan. Ie, Resource Based and SEN, Special Schools, Mainstream, MNSS or Independent, Post 16 & FE, Hospital and Alternative Provision (AP) and other.
5. The budget plan (appendix 2) shows the funding split by category, so that we are able to view the share of the allocation and monitor against these.
6. The main areas of note:
 - a) The place funding recoupment is subject to change after the import/export exercise and place change requests and this will be adjusted once known.
 - b) Growth has been built into the plan to take account of the additional EHCP's levels particularly in mainstream and MNSS provision.
 - c) Post 16 provision has seen an increase over the past two years and this ongoing pressure has been factored into the budget.
 - d) The use of Alternative provision and future plans for its use have been included in the budget.
 - e) The inclusion support and 14-16 projects have been rolled into 2023/24

- f) The majority of the high needs block budget is demand led and will need close monitoring in order to realise an in year balance.

Recommendations

7. That Forum agrees the high needs budget for 2023/24
8. That Forum notes the ongoing and increasing pressures due to demand within high needs budget deficit and that the budget proposal is linked to the debt management plan and written statement of action.
9. Forum agrees to the formation of a sub-group to monitor and report on the high need spend and the debt management plan.

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