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**Meeting of the Dudley Schools Forum – 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Update**

**Purpose**

1. To provide Schools Forum with an update on the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme in Dudley.

**Recommendation**

2. That Schools Forum note the content of the DBV Update Report

**Background**

3. In our November 2023 report, we discussed the challenges faced in 2022, emphasising the overspend of the High Needs Block. We introduced the Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV) programme and its key objectives. Notably, the Department for Education (DfE) has recently extended the DBV Grant period by 12 months, now spanning until March 2025. This extension highlights our dedication and allows us the additional time to make meaningful progress.

Building on our prior discussions, this report delves into the recent advancements and progress made in addressing our challenges. Our workstreams, as highlighted by Newton Europe's findings, remain central to our endeavours.

The four primary focus areas are:

- Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer
- Developing and delivering our sufficiency strategy
- Preparation for Adulthood
- Redesigning our Spend Profile

### **Activity since last period: Key Developments**

#### **4. Workstream 1 - Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer**

Within Workstream 1, our collaboration with Genuine Partnerships to rollout the four cornerstones training continues. A total of eight training sessions were undertaken including 2 sessions with the Parent Carer Forum (PCF). A total of 88 attendees actively participated, underscoring the collaborative ethos we are fostering. Two additional sessions are planned for January 2024. We are also looking to extend the invite to all schools to access the same training so that we can develop a whole system understanding and language narrative around coproduction. Looking ahead, our focus will be to review the established success measures against the four cornerstones model to identify the expected positive outcomes we expect to see as part of coproduction successes.

A dedicated task and finish group, supported by four sub-groups, have been established to reframe our Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) Offer. The group is working collectively to standardise the title 'Ordinarily Available Provision' with a view to simplifying this for better understanding. Additionally, work is underway to draw insights from practices in other Local Authorities who have successfully developed their OAP framework to support our development process. Discussions are in progress to explore the possibility of the digitalisation of the framework for improved accessibility.

To further our collaborative efforts, we have scheduled a 'Schools Workshop Day' to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> January at Himley Hall. This day aims to allow school leaders and SENCOs to discuss and influence future SEN practice and provision. Alongside this event, a school's

questionnaire will be shared with educational settings in January 2024, to gather feedback from schools to refine our specialist services.

As part of the work specific to Redesigning our Specialist Services Delivery Model, a stakeholder working group has been established and is fully underway in undertaking a service assessment and gap analysis of the specialist services delivery, critical steps in shaping our future service delivery requirements.

An evaluation of training requirements for mainstream schools is in progress, this work will focus on building capacity in mainstream schools across all areas of the graduated model and will include workforce development of our own specialist advisory services.

### **Workstream 2 - Developing and delivering our Sufficiency Strategy.**

We have recently commissioned 1<sup>st</sup> Planner as our delivery partner for the development of our SEND Sufficiency Strategy. This work will support Dudley in providing a comprehensive picture of capacity across the special school and the Alternative Provision estate. A stakeholder working group is in development to ensure full stakeholder engagement and coproduction.

As part of the implementation of Resource Bases, four SEND Units have been set up within primary schools, with Dawley Brook and Jessons in full swing. The tender process has commenced for all interested schools and 4 responses of interest have been received.

The establishment of the commissioning for Inclusion Hubs in early years settings is nearing completion. While we encountered some delays related to contract finalisation and staffing challenges, these issues are now nearing resolution. As we move forward, we plan to initiate the placement of children with SEND into these Hubs at the start of the January term, offering an average of 8 places per setting. As part of the implementation, a contract has been issued for Netherton Park Nursery, with a subsequent request underway for a Capital Grant award to facilitate necessary infrastructure changes.

### **Workstream 3 – Preparation for Adulthood**

This workstream is now part of the formal agreement with the DfE.

Over recent weeks, we encountered some delays in establishing the workplan due to overlaps with activities within APP 6 area of work. However, following a comprehensive review and clarification of roles and responsibilities, we have now successfully developed a refined workplan for this critical area. We anticipate commencing the deliverables early January, ensuring that our efforts are streamlined and focused. For a high-level overview of planned work between January to March, please refer to the breakdown provided in Table 1. Our commitment remains steadfast to expanding post-16 developments.

### **Workstream 4 – Redesigning our Spend Profile**

This workstream is not included in the formal agreement with the DfE, but it is a vital action that forms the foundation for all other DBV work being undertaken.

Redesigning our Spend Profile is a strategic response to our commitment to delivering high-quality educational support and services for children and young people with SEND while addressing budgetary constraints. The primary objective of this workstream is to optimise our spending by identifying Post 16 EHCPs suitable for cessation and improving the timeliness of annual reviews. Through these actions, we aim to enhance service quality, ensure appropriate outcomes within EHCPs, and drive down costs effectively.

Table 1 shows the programme plan of Workstream activities for the period from January 2024 to March 2024, providing a comprehensive overview of the next steps for each Workstream within the programme.

Table 1. Programme Plan of Workstream Activities for January 2024 to March 2024

Workstream 1 - Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer.					
	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
<b>1.1 Commissioning of Genuine Partnerships</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Foster collaborative partnerships to enhance stakeholder engagement, leverage external resources, and promote co-production values.	Conduct a review of the success measures of the Four Cornerstones Model Articulate expected positive outcomes to indicate successful co-production efforts. Refresh partnership agreements and monitor their contributions to the DBV programme	Enhanced collaboration with external partners Improved stakeholder engagement- Strengthened co-production values	On Track		
<b>1.2 Reframing our Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) Offer</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> An inclusive framework for improved access and effectiveness while setting clear expectations for schools and settings	Design & develop the OAP framework, focusing on clear expectations for schools and settings. Undertake a baseline assessment on EHCP requests and other relevant metrics before, during and after implementation. Undertake the Schools Workshop Day and incorporate the feedback into the work of 1.3 (Service Redesign)	Clear expectations for OAP in schools and settings Enhanced provision of support, resources, and services	On Track		
<b>1.3 Redesigning our Specialist Services Delivery Models</b>	Continue with service assessment and gap analysis, highlighting areas for improvement.	Improved support and confidence in schools	Monitor		

## Workstream 1 - Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer.

	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
<b>Purpose:</b> Adopt an outward-facing approach to foster greater school support, confidence, and in-house capacity for children with SEND	Collaboratively design ideal services required to meet identified needs and align with the OAP framework. Develop a comprehensive training matrix to enhance staffing capacity and identify gaps, ensuring alignment with overall goals	Enhanced in-house capacity to meet children's needs			
<b>1.4 Supporting Schools to Build Capacity</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Identify training needs, develop tailored materials, and equip mainstream settings to support children without EHCPs	Determine the specific training gaps & needs of mainstream settings. Commission training providers and develop training materials	Improved capacity of mainstream schools Enhanced support for children without EHCPs	Monitor		
<b>1.5 Communication Plan for the DBV Programme</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> To ensure effective and tailored communication strategies are established and executed for the DBV Programme.	Develop the draft DBV communication plan and present to the programme group for review and feedback. Craft messages aligned with the programme's goals, determine effective communication channels, and develop a timeline for dissemination. Implement the agreed plan, share messaging using relevant platforms. Establish a mechanism for feedback.	Parent and Carers of SEND, Schools including broader stakeholders and internal services are well-informed about the DBV programme's objectives, progress and opportunities. Systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of	On Track		

Workstream 1 - Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer.					
	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
		communication efforts, ensuring alignment with programme goals.			

Workstream 2 - Developing and delivering our sufficiency strategy.					
	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
2.1 Developing and Implementing Sufficiency Plan  <b>Purpose:</b> To create a comprehensive plan that ensures there are adequate services and resources to meet the current and future needs of children and young people with SEND in Dudley	Engage key stakeholders for strategy development and establish stakeholder working group. Work with 1 <sup>st</sup> Planner to commence of in-depth assessment and understand needs. Perform a gap analysis to identify shortfalls	Improved service adequacy and resource allocation Enhanced understanding of children's needs and capacity gaps.	Monitor		
2.2 Implementation of Resource Bases/SEND Units  <b>Purpose:</b> To establish and operate Resource Bases and SEND Units to	Continue the ongoing actions related to the implementation of Resource Bases/SEND Units, focusing on effective integration with mainstream	Establishment of resource bases and SEND units. Integration with mainstream schools Monitoring student progress	On Track		

## Workstream 2 - Developing and delivering our sufficiency strategy.

	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
provide specialised educational support and services for children and young people with SEND	schools, data collection, and student placement				
2.3 Commissioning of Resource Bases/SEND Units for 2024	Continue the ongoing actions related to the commissioning of Resource Bases/SEND Units for 2024, including identifying specific schools, and progressing through the tender process.	Expansion of resource bases Stakeholder consultation and involvement	On Track		
2.4 Commissioning & Implementation of Early Years Inclusion Hubs  <b>Purpose:</b> To ensure the smooth implementation and operation of the Early Years Inclusion Hubs	Complete contracts	Establishment & rollout of Early Years Inclusion Hubs	On Track		
2.5 Implementation of Early Identification Pathway with Health  <b>Purpose:</b> To establish and execute an early identification process in collaboration with health services	Early Notification Process is now in place, to increase the profile of this process with GP's and other Health Partners	Enhanced early identification of children's needs through collaboration with Health	On Track		



Workstream 3 – Preparation for Adulthood					
	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
3.1 Develop the Post 16 and Post 19 PFA Pathway  <b>Purpose:</b> Create a clear transition pathway for young people with disabilities.	List all relevant stakeholders for Post 16 education in the borough. Conduct a survey of current education providers regarding curriculum provision. Create a new 'I-can' strategy highlighting potential career routes for Post 16 and Post 19 students. Establish a Post 16 working group to discuss career progression, retention, curriculum design, and NEET status	Empowering smooth transition for young people	Monitor		
3.2 Development of Apprenticeships and Supported Internships  <b>Purpose:</b> Create Apprenticeship and Supported Internships opportunities for Young People with SEND in Dudley	Establish communication channels and partnerships with the local Employment & Skills Board Create a comprehensive list of training and apprenticeship providers across the borough. Evaluate the current availability and demand for supported internships and apprenticeships within the community	Enabling pathways to employment for young people	Monitor		

Workstream 3 – Preparation for Adulthood					
	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
3.3 Implement Independent Travel Training  <b>Purpose:</b> Empower young people with disabilities travel skills for independence	Identify travel challenges with stakeholders. Develop travel training curriculum. Allocate budget	Enhancing mobility and independence of young people	Monitor		

Workstream 4 – Redesigning our Spend Profile					
	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
4.1 EHCP Cessations – Post 16  <b>Purpose:</b> Improve the annual review process and identify Post 16 EHCPs due for cessation	Ongoing review to identify and prioritise Year 11 EHCPs to be targeted for cessation. Implement strategies for improved efficiency in annual reviews. Attend scheduled reviews as required.	Driving down costs	Monitor		

	Focus on resource allocation to ensure the cessation work continues		
4.2 Develop Data infrastructure for DBV Programme  <b>Purpose:</b> Design and implement an effective data infrastructure	Determine data sources of impact measures. Finalise DBV dashboard	Enhance data driven decision-making	Monitor
4.3 Design & implement operational metrics for benefits.  <b>Purpose:</b> Develop metrics for benefits calculation	Conduct an assessment to identify operational metrics. Review and update the existing forecast model in line with the DBV Programme	Improved financial analysis and decision-making	Monitor

## **Finance**

5. Grant funding of £1m from DfE will support the ongoing development and initial delivery of the DVB programme outcomes. Base budgets within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) (High Needs Block) and capital funding approved within the local authority's capital programme will also support ongoing activities as detailed above which will seek to achieve required efficiencies. As at the end of the financial year 2022/23, the local authority had a deficit balance on the DSG (High Needs Block) of £26.7m with a current budgeted deficit for 2023/24 of £31.3m and a forecast deficit of £34.0m. The Delivering Better Value in SEND programme aims to bring under control and reverse this increasing deficit, which can, until the end of the 2025/26 financial year, continue to be held in an unusable reserve and carried forward as a deficit on the local authority's DSG balance.

## **Law**

6. The Schools Forum is a statutory decision making and consultative body constituted in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and its associated regulations, including the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, to enable members of the local school community to work in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council when making decisions about school funding and finances. The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023.

## **Risk Management**

7. There are no material risks to the Council's Risk Management Framework resulting from the contents of this report.

## **Equality Impact**

8. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

9. This report has no direct implications for human resources, organisational development, or service transformation.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

10. There is no impact on the potential to commercially trade and no impact on our customer base.

## **Environment / Climate Change**

11. This report has no direct implications on the environment or the Council's work in addressing Climate and achieving Net Zero target by 2030.

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

12. The 2022/2025 Council Plan is clear in its ambitions for educational outcomes including raising skills, educational and work potential, increasing good or better schools and closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils. This report relates to the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (HNB) funding to support the educational outcomes of children and young people in the borough.



**Catherine Driscoll**  
**Director of Children's Services**

Contact Officers:  
Susan Powell, Head of SEND  
Telephone: 01384 816276  
Email: [susan.powell@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:susan.powell@dudley.gov.uk)

Catherine Ludwig, Finance Manager  
Telephone: 01384 815075  
Email: [catherine.ludwig@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.ludwig@dudley.gov.uk)