

Schools Forum 27 February 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.

Recommendations

2. That Schools Forum:
 - Note the content of the DBV Update Report

Background

3. This month's update brings a focused review of our recent progress. With the last DBV update less than four weeks ago, we will highlight advancements made in key areas since then. As per the high-level programme plan in Table 2 and shared last month, we are still midway through activities scheduled until the end of March.

To ensure wider workstream stakeholder engagement and participation, we have contacted all primary and secondary schools to 'Join our DBV Workstreams.' A link to the form has been shared listing all the workstreams, sub-working groups, and task and finish groups available.

We are pleased to announce that over 40 schools have requested to participate across multiple workstreams. In some instances, the same educational setting has requested to attend different workstreams with different staff members. To ensure

broad coverage of schools spread across all workstreams and to avoid heavy focus in one area, we will review the total list and inform schools of the workstreams they are part of. Meeting invites and Teams links will be shared after the February half-term break.

Additionally, in response to the last forum's request, the deadline for the Schools survey has been extended. Feedback from this and the 'Schools Workshop Day' held at Himley Hall will be shared in our next update.

The four primary focus areas and the supporting stakeholder groups include:

Table 1 Workstreams and Stakeholder Groups

No.	Workstream Name	Name of Stakeholder Group	Frequency
1	Redesigning our Specialist Services	Specialist Inclusion Service Redesign Stakeholder Working Group	Fortnightly
		Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) Task & Finish Group	Monthly
		OAP Subgroup SEMH (social, emotional, mental health)	Monthly
		OAP Subgroup P&S (physical &/or sensory needs)	Monthly
		OAP Subgroup C&I (communication & interaction)	Monthly
		OAP Subgroup C&L (cognition & learning)	Monthly
		Building Schools Capacity Task & Finish Group (training in mainstream schools)	To be agreed
2	Developing and Delivering our Sufficiency Strategy	Sufficiency Strategy Stakeholder Working Group	To be agreed
3	Preparation for Adulthood and Post 16	PFA Stakeholder Working Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NEET and Employability - Careers, Progression & Transition 	To be agreed
4	Redesigning our Spend Profile		

Activity since last month: Key Developments

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

We have successfully completed 10 sessions with genuine partnerships as part of our implementation of the four cornerstones framework aimed to create good quality co-production and inclusive practice for children and young people with SEND. We have extended the invitation to all schools in Dudley to join us in this initiative and we hope to see you at one of our upcoming sessions scheduled to take place in March and April.

We are also working towards co-producing our 'Working Together Charter for Dudley SEND,' which will support the four cornerstones framework. The charter will outline our shared vision and help us build trust, communicate effectively, and value the diverse perspectives and contributions of everyone across the SEND partnership. We believe that the charter will benefit all stakeholders involved in the SEND journey, and we look forward to your feedback and input in due course.

The Specialist Inclusion Services stakeholder working group is embedded and meeting on a fortnightly basis. Work continues on identifying gaps to shape the reorganisation of the future service model. The school's workshop has taken place which saw excellent representation from Heads and SENCOs from Early years providers, primaries, secondaries, and post 16. A Headteachers briefing has also taken place where DBV was the main agenda item.

For the Ordinarily Available Provision Workstream (OAP), broader representation has been sought to participate in the sub-groups to inform each of the four broad areas of SEN of the ordinarily available provision. Interest has been expressed from education colleagues from Early Years settings, Schools and Post 16 partners to join the LA with health practitioners to start drafting the content of the OAP framework. The next sub-group meeting is arranged for the end of February.

Following feedback, the OAP task and finish group considered the proposal of using 'Revolution' as the preferred digital platform to 'house' the OAP framework. Implications were discussed, and initial plans for what preparation may be required were shared.

Work continues with the evaluation of the training requirements for mainstream schools. Our core current training offer primarily consists of training offered by our specialist services, complemented by bespoke training opportunities from various providers. Additionally, local independent providers, NHS services such as Speech and Language Therapy, and national providers contribute to our training resources. We have begun gathering information to better understand our training landscape, with the specifics to be determined by the task and finish group.

Workstream 2 - Developing and delivering our Sufficiency Strategy.

Work continues to commission the third-party supplier for our SEND Sufficiency Strategy development. Once completed, the stakeholder working group will be fully established. Nine schools have expressed interest in joining, and we aim to finalise the group as soon as possible. This workstream will support Dudley in providing a comprehensive picture of capacity across the special school and the Alternative Provision estate.

The tender process for the Resource Bases has concluded, and we are currently consolidating the panel's feedback to reach a decision. By the end of February, potential schools will be contacted regarding the outcome. Additionally, we are actively seeking schools, particularly secondary schools, interested in hosting base provision. We encourage interested schools to come forward and express their interest in participating.

As February commenced, we have seen children starting to join the Inclusion Hubs, as in January they had various introduction sessions. The Hub network is working well, and the Early Years Service are supporting each setting to ensure services are well launched. We are yet to deliver an Inclusion Hub for the Brierley Hill area, though we have identified a provider and we are working with commissioning to commence a direct award (pending approval of this approach). We anticipate, all being well for contracts to be concluded by the end of February, where soon after we expect to begin placing Children into the Hub by mid to late March.

Workstream 3 – Preparation for Adulthood

For Workstream 3, our commitment encompasses a range of factors crucial for preparing young people for adulthood. This includes ensuring that transitions, careers, Education, and addressing NEET are all encapsulated within this workstream.

Efforts are underway to establish the setup and structure of this workstream. Given the overlap with Dudley Adult Social Care, specifically regarding Post 19 - Preparation for Adulthood (PFA), our aim is to thoroughly consider any overlaps and remove potential duplication.

We are in the process of establishing two stakeholder working groups. One will focus on NEET and Employability, aiming to formulate a comprehensive post-16 curriculum and pathways strategy. This strategy will offer a holistic approach for post-16 options in Dudley, providing clear routes for various career paths. This effort aligns with the work of the 'I can' project by the virtual schools, which promotes the belief of 'I can be anything I want to be' and outlines the necessary steps to achieve these aspirations.

The second stakeholder working group will concentrate on a Careers, Progression, and Transition into Adulthood Group. We anticipate engagement and participation from primary, secondary, and beyond. We are also collaborating closely with our colleagues in Social Care who manage the Post 19 Preparation for Adulthood Project. To ensure seamless integration across this workstream, the lead for Workstream 3 is also heading the Employability Working Group.

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 2 shows the programme plan of Workstream activities for the period from January 2024 to March 2024, providing a high-level overview of the next steps for each Workstream within the programme. A more detailed breakdown of activities is shared by workstream leads within each of the stakeholder working groups.

Table 2. 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
1.1 Commissioning of Genuine Partnerships Purpose: Foster collaborative partnerships to enhance stakeholder engagement, leverage external resources, and promote co-production values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced collaboration with external partners• Improved stakeholder engagement- Strengthened co-production values	On Track		
1.2 Reframing our Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) Offer Purpose: An inclusive framework for improved access and effectiveness while setting clear expectations for schools and settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear expectations for OAP in schools and settings• Enhanced provision of support, resources, and services	On Track		
1.3 Redesigning our Specialist Services Delivery Models Purpose: Adopt an outward-facing approach to foster greater school support, confidence, and in-house capacity for children with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue with service assessment and gap analysis, highlighting areas for improvement.• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved support and confidence in schools• Enhanced in-house capacity to meet children's needs	Monitor		
1.4 Supporting Schools to Build Capacity Purpose: Identify training needs, develop tailored materials, and equip mainstream settings to support children without EHCPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine the specific training gaps & needs of mainstream settings.• Commission training providers and develop training materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved capacity of mainstream schools• Enhanced support for children without EHCPs	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
1.5 Communication Plan for the DBV Programme Purpose: To ensure effective and tailored communication strategies are established and executed for the DBV Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 communication efforts, ensuring alignment with programme goals. 	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
2.1 Developing and Implementing Sufficiency Plan Purpose: 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage key stakeholders for strategy development and establish stakeholder working group. Work with 1st Planner to commence of in-depth assessment and understand needs. Perform a gap analysis to identify shortfalls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved service adequacy and resource allocation Enhanced understanding of children's needs and capacity gaps. 	Monitor		
2.2 Implementation of Resource Bases/SEND Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the ongoing actions related to the implementation of Resource Bases/SEND Units, focusing on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of resource bases and SEND units. 	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
Purpose: To establish and operate Resource Bases and SEND Units to provide specialised educational support and services for children and young people with SEND	effective integration with mainstream schools, data collection, and student placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration with mainstream schools Monitoring student progress 			
2.3 Commissioning of Resource Bases/SEND Units for 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of resource bases Stakeholder consultation and involvement 	On Track		
2.4 Commissioning & Implementation of Early Years Inclusion Hubs Purpose: To ensure the smooth implementation and operation of the Early Years Inclusion Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment & rollout of Early Years Inclusion Hubs 	On Track		
2.5 Implementation of Early Identification Pathway with Health Purpose: To establish and execute an early identification process in collaboration with health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Notification Process is now in place, to increase the profile of this process with GP's and other Health Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<p>3.1 Develop the Post 16 and Post 19 PFA Pathway</p> <p>Purpose: Create a clear transition pathway for young people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List all relevant stakeholders for Post 16 education in the borough. Conduct a survey of current education providers regarding curriculum provision. Start the development of 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering smooth transition for young people 	Monitor		
<p>3.2 Development of Apprenticeships and Supported Internships</p> <p>Purpose: Create Apprenticeship and Supported Internships opportunities for Young People with SEND in Dudley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling pathways to employment for young people 	Monitor		
<p>3.3 Implement Independent Travel Training</p> <p>Purpose: Empower young people with disabilities travel skills for independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify travel challenges with stakeholders. Develop travel training curriculum. Allocate budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Purpose: Improve the annual review process and identify Post 16 EHCPs due for cessation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Focus on resource allocation to ensure the cessation work continues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving down costs 	Monitor		
4.2 Develop Data infrastructure for DBV Programme Purpose: Design and implement an effective data infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine data sources of impact measures. Finalise DBV dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance data driven decision-making 	Monitor		
4.3 Design & implement operational metrics for benefits. Purpose: Develop metrics for benefits calculation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an assessment to identify operational metrics. Review and update the existing forecast model in line with the DBV Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.



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