

## **Schools Forum 14 November 2023**

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

#### **Delivering Best Value (DBV) in SEND Update**

##### **Purpose**

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

##### **Recommendations**

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

##### **Background**

3. In our last report, we discussed the background and challenges we faced in 2022, particularly in relation to the overspend of the High Needs Block. We highlighted the initiation of the Delivering Best Value in SEND (DBV) program, along with its key focus areas.

This update report builds upon our previous discussions and aims to provide you with the latest developments and progress made since then. We will focus on the ongoing efforts to address the challenges outlined in our last communication and provide insight into our journey towards a more sustainable and cost-effective SEND provision. The workstreams established in response to the findings by Newton Europe continue to be at the forefront of our focus.

In our ongoing efforts to address the challenge, we have refined our key strategic workstreams. The four core areas of focus now include:

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

Moreover, we are pleased to report the addition of our DBV Programme lead (interim) who will play a pivotal role in supporting workstream leads in driving the delivery of these strategic workstreams.

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

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

To ensure a collective approach to co-production at a system-wide level, we have engaged Genuine Partnerships to deliver 4 Cornerstones Training across our partnership, which includes the Local Authority (LA), Health, Schools, and the Parent Carer Forum (PCF). This collaborative effort is intended to drive the required changes effectively.

Children's Services is in the final stages of Phase 2 redesign, with a strong commitment to redeveloping the delivery model of specialist services. The goal is to provide increased capacity and confidence within our mainstream settings. This redesign primarily focuses on services related to Hearing, Visual, and Physical Impairments, Speech and Language support, and Autism Outreach. Furthermore, a review is underway to adapt the Learning Support Service model currently in place. We aim to complete this work by Spring/Summer 2024, paving the way for new delivery models to be established for the 2024/25 Academic Year.

In line with our commitment to align with key strategic priorities and drivers, we have initiated a review of the Dudley SEND Self Evaluation (SEF) and Dudley SEND Strategy. These reviews will account for the Delivering Best Value (DBV) Programme's outcomes, emphasising the importance of delivering a clear Ordinarily Available and Graduated Approach as a pivotal component in advancing our SEND provision.

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

Workstream 2 is well progressed. We have commissioned additional resource bases and SEND Units within mainstream schools to provide additional provision from September 2023, and have now commissioned five locality Inclusion Hubs within early years settings/provision. We have invested in the building of a replacement special school (Pens Meadow) which is on target for delivery within the autumn term of September 2025.

We launched a comprehensive review of our Alternative Provision and Inclusion strategy in September 2023. An initial workshop with internal officers and representatives from social care, health and SEND took place on 28 September and this will be followed by workshops with Secondary Headteachers on 12 October and Primary Headteachers on 20 October. This will allow us to scope the work required to redesign our alternative provision into the future. A key change is the focus on developing 'Educational Pathways'. As part of the review, we are sharing key data with schools about exclusions and suspensions and expenditure on contracts.

We are also revising our understanding and need for our Alternative Provision/Pupil Referral Units and the place they have to play. Our focus is shifting to a preventative model where fundamentally, timely intervention means that we are preventing all exclusions and supporting children with SEND to be appropriately supported to remain in mainstream education.

We are currently working to also commission Welfare Call to add value to our intelligence data on engagement and take up of specialist provision by SEND learners. It is anticipated that such data will provide clearer evidence to support best value decisions regarding provision, and influence EHCP planning to ensure outcomes-based impact.

Work is developing on our sufficiency strategy to consider projection data in order that we are mindful to have the right provision to provide sufficiency, but not develop a glut of provision that fosters a culture of escalation of provision type (irrespective of actual need).

### Workstream 3 – Preparation of Adulthood

Preparation for Adulthood continues to focus on areas beyond the APP. Further work is being undertaken to ensure that post 16 developments already delivered are expanded upon to be inclusive of children who do not have an EHCP (those with SEN or SEN Support). Table 1 provides detail of the upcoming programme of work.

### 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 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 October 2023 to January 2024, providing a comprehensive overview of the next steps for each Workstream within the programme.

Table 1. Programme Plan of Workstream Activities for October 2023 to January 2024

<b>Workstream 1 - Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer.</b>					
	Next Steps (Between Oct 2023 to Jan 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
<p><b>1.1 Commissioning of Genuine Partnerships</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Foster collaborative partnerships to enhance stakeholder engagement, leverage external resources, and promote co-production values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify potential partners for collaboration based on Four Cornerstones Co-production work.</li> <li>Refresh partnership agreements</li> <li>Undertake training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced collaboration with external partners</li> <li>Improved stakeholder engagement- Strengthened co-production values</li> </ul>	On Track		
<p><b>1.2 Reframing our Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) Offer</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> An inclusive framework for improved access and effectiveness while setting clear expectations for schools and settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form Task &amp; Finish Group and define their objectives.</li> <li>Kick-off subgroups and undertake a baseline assessment.</li> <li>Develop the framework and allocate necessary resources.</li> <li>Engage pupils, parents, and stakeholders for input.</li> <li>Review and test the draft framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear expectations for OAP in schools and settings</li> <li>Enhanced provision of support, resources, and services</li> </ul>	Monitor		
<p><b>1.3 Redesigning our Specialist Services Delivery Models</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Adopt an outward-facing approach to foster greater school support, confidence, and in-house capacity for children with SEND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setup Specialist Services Redesign Working Group</li> <li>Define objectives, roles, and responsibilities.</li> <li>Conduct a service assessment and gap analysis.</li> <li>Collaboratively design ideal services required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved support and confidence in schools</li> <li>Enhanced in-house capacity to meet children's needs</li> </ul>	On Track		
<p><b>1.4 Supporting Schools to Build Capacity</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Identify training needs, develop tailored materials, and equip mainstream settings to support children without EHCPs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine specific training gaps and needs.</li> <li>Commission training providers and develop training materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved capacity of mainstream schools</li> <li>Enhanced support for children without EHCPs</li> </ul>	Monitor		

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

	Next Steps (Between Oct 2023 to Jan 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
<p>2.1 Developing and Implementing Sufficiency Plan</p> <p><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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify additional resources for root cause analysis and data cleansing.</li> <li>Identify gaps and priority developments for SEND pathways.</li> <li>Establish shared tracking systems for EHCP provision.</li> <li>Engage key stakeholders for strategy development.</li> <li>Conduct in-depth assessments and understand needs.</li> <li>Determine specific services and provision capacity required.</li> <li>Perform a gap analysis to identify shortfalls.</li> <li>Collaborate with stakeholders for the development of a comprehensive strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved service adequacy and resource allocation</li> <li>Enhanced understanding of children's needs and capacity gaps.</li> </ul>	Monitor		
<p>2.2 Implementation of Resource Bases/SEND Units</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> To establish and operate Resource Bases and SEND Units to provide specialised educational support and services for children and young people with SEND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure effective integration with mainstream schools (ongoing)</li> <li>Supervise data collection on student progress and resource base effectiveness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of resource bases and SEND units.</li> <li>Integration with mainstream schools</li> <li>Monitoring student progress</li> </ul>	On Track		
<p>2.3 Commissioning of Resource Bases/SEND Units for 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify specific schools for resource bases and collaborate with stakeholders.</li> <li>Gather evidence of the voice of the child</li> <li>Proceed with the tender process and evaluation.</li> <li>Statutory consultation period for providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of resource bases</li> <li>Stakeholder consultation and involvement</li> </ul>	On Track		
<p>2.4 Commissioning of Early Years Inclusion Hubs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete tender of the Early Years hubs and draft contracts</li> <li>Agree on and sign contracts with providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of Early Years Inclusion Hubs</li> </ul>	On Track		
<p>2.5 Implementation of Early Years Inclusion Hubs (Oct 2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide hubs with a list of allocated children.</li> <li>Introduce parents and children to the hubs.</li> <li>Manage TUPE and staff transfer to hubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rollout and operationalisation of</li> </ul>	On Track		

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

	Next Steps (Between Oct 2023 to Jan 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
<p><b>Purpose:</b> To ensure the smooth implementation and operation of the Early Years Inclusion Hubs</p>		Early Years Inclusion Hubs			
<p>2.6 Implementation of Early Identification Pathway with Health</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> To establish and execute an early identification process in collaboration with health services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and agree upon the Early Notification Process with Health</li> <li>Share the Early Notification Process at DLT (Dudley Leadership Team).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced early identification of children's needs through collaboration with Health</li> </ul>	On Track		

## Workstream 3 – Preparation for Adulthood

	Next Steps (Between Oct 2023 to Jan 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
<p>3.1 Develop the PFA Pathway</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Create a clear transition pathway for young people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify stakeholders for insights.</li> <li>Design draft structured PFA pathway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empowering smooth transition for young people</li> </ul>	On Track		
<p>3.2 Development of Apprenticeships and Supported Internships</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Create Apprenticeship and Supported Internships opportunities for Young People with SEND in Dudley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with Employment &amp; Skills Board</li> <li>Assess demand for internships.</li> <li>Develop program design and framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling pathways to employment for young people</li> </ul>	On Track		
<p>3.3 Implement Independent Travel Training</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Empower young people with disabilities travel skills for independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify travel challenges with stakeholders.</li> <li>Develop travel training curriculum.</li> <li>Allocate budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhancing mobility and independence of young people</li> </ul>	Monitor		

## Workstream 4 – Redesigning our Spend Profile

	Next Steps (Between Oct 2023 to Jan 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
<p>4.1 EHCP Cessations</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Improve the annual review process and identify EHCPs for cessation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify capacity and resource to focus on cohort.</li> <li>Identify EHCPs to be targeted for cessation.</li> <li>Implement strategies for improved efficiency in annual reviews.</li> <li>Undertake reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driving down costs</li> </ul>	<b>Monitor</b>		
<p>4.2 Develop Data infrastructure for DBV Programme</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Design and implement an effective data infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop DBV dashboard to report on programme impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance data driven decision-making</li> </ul>	<b>Monitor</b>		
<p>4.3 Design &amp; implement operational metrics for benefits.</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Develop metrics for benefits calculation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create operational metrics and define KPI's.</li> <li>Determine data sources.</li> <li>Implement system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved financial analysis and decision-making</li> </ul>	<b>Monitor</b>		



## **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 £26.676m with a current budgeted deficit for 2023/24 of £31.278m. 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 2041.

## **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)