

DEDICATED SCHOOLS BUDGET – BUDGET MONITORING 2020-21

Purpose of the Report

1. To present budget monitoring information against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the financial year 2020-21 as at 31st January 2021.

Main Considerations

2. Appendix 1 to this report outlines the budget monitoring summary as at 31st January 2021.
3. An overspend of £9.032 million is currently projected against the overall schools budget. The main driver for this forecast variance is the on-going pressures on the high needs block, the reasons for these are known and understood. The detailed budget monitoring report is shown in Appendix 1.

Early Years Budgets (Budget £27.827M, forecast variance (0.326M))

4. The pandemic has created much uncertainty around early years and grant guidance around settings has changed following government expectations around opening.
5. Summer Term until 31st May 2020 – the government's expectation was that settings would open to facilitate children of key workers, vulnerable children with a social worker and those children with an education health and care plan. Open settings were paid at 100% with additional incentive payments of £100 per child per week to fund the additional costs of PPE and deep cleaning. Closed settings were paid at 80%. A hardship fund was set up for those closed settings who evidenced financial hardship as a result of COVID19. From 1st June, the Government's expectation was that all settings would be open and therefore payments continued to be made at 100% to open settings and 80% to closed settings with lower payments made to open settings to help fund the additional costs of cleaning and PPE.
6. For the Autumn Term, there have been broadly the same number of children in settings as in the previous Autumn however, dual placements are not currently recommended and therefore some settings have above average reduced hours and some increased hours. Clearly the children in settings require funding at the usual rate in order for them to be able to staff appropriately. No additional payments for PPE and cleaning have been made. For providers who may be seeing a temporary dip, support payments are being made at the current hourly rates, representing above average reductions across the sector over the last three years.
7. For the Spring Term, the government's expectation is that settings will remain open whilst schools are closed and will only be paid for children attending settings.
8. Due to the uncertainty, no variance is forecast on the budgets for the free entitlement for 15- and 30-hours childcare for 2, 3 & 4 year olds. There are small underspends in both age funding streams however, this is aligned with the slight reduction in actual variance in take up and it is anticipated that the DfE's post financial year adjustment will remove this in whole or, part if the January 2021 census numbers fall.

	Budgeted PTE	Forecast PTE	Forecast PTE Variance	Budgeted Spend £M	Forecast Spend £M	Forecast spend Variance £M
2-year olds	774	774	Nil	2.382	2.382	Nil
3- & 4-year olds	9,938	9,938	Nil	24.358	24.358	Nil
ISF	447	303	(144)	0.357	0.210	(0.147)

9. The 19-20 adjustment based on the January 2020 census data was an increase of £0.539 million. In addition, the 20-21 allocation increased by £0.943 million. This reflects a higher count of children than the previous year.

10. The local authority has a duty of sufficiency in this sector and is working closely with providers to support through these turbulent times, providing additional financial support whilst following the COVID guidance and remaining within the terms and conditions of the grant funding. This means that private income losses cannot be supported from this grant.

COMF Grant Funding

11. A separate COVID grant has been received by the local authority (COMF grant) to support, facilitate and aid containment of the virus. An amount of £1.0 million has been earmarked to allocate to providers under certain criteria, namely

- a. Payment to open or partially open settings - funded and non funded provision; a one-off grant to support purchase of PPE and increased cleaning costs. A payment of £0.231M was paid out to providers in January 2021.
- b. To provide additional support in the event of continued staff absence due to pregnancy, extremely clinically vulnerable or COVID sickness in cases where staff cannot be furloughed to aid containment of the virus
- c. To fund private losses at the EYE rates where bubbles burst, and closures take place. This includes wraparound childcare.
- d. To fund a deep clean prior to the re-opening of a bubble or, whole setting

12. For schemes b to d above, the deadline for applications is 22nd March when payments will be assessed and assuming affordable within the £1M, will be paid. To date, 36 applications have been received and another 30 have been advised.

Schools Budgets (Budget £291.677M, forecast variance (£2.273M))

13. The forecast underspend on schools largely relates to the schools growth fund which currently shows an underspend and is helping to offset the overall pressure on the DSG.

High Needs Budgets (Budget £53.632M, forecast variance £11.634M)

14. High Needs budgets are projected to overspend by £11.634m. The biggest areas of overspend are Independent Special School packages, alternative provision, named pupil allowances and top ups. When the level of funding available does not match the local needs, the budget cannot be set at an achievable level and so the location of the overspend is not an indication of individual budget issues but that the whole block under significant pressure.

15. The major driver of the increased cost is volume. Activity (volume) is measured in FTE – full time equivalent pupils. Variance analysis is provided at Appendix 2. It is important to note that the number of EHCPs being requested has slowed slightly

however this could be due to reduced face to face contact with pupils due to the COVID pandemic.

	Children with an EHCP in Wiltshire
Number as at 1 st April 2020	3,860
As at 31 st January 2021	
Forecast demand (<i>based on historical trend</i>)	
Forecast Year to Date Movement	XXX (XXX% increase)

16. As Schools Forum are aware, much work has been done, over recent years to investigate and address the issues. More detail is reported regularly through the high needs working group update from the Director, Education and Skills.

DSG Reserve

17. The reserve brought forward of £11.350 million is increased by the positive early years block adjustment of £0.539 million. The forecast overspend would take the reserve into a deficit position of £19.843 million.

18. With effect from 2018-19, the department tightened the rules governing deficits in local authorities' overall DSG accounts, under which local authorities must explain plans for bringing DSG account back into balance. The DfE required a report from any local authority that had a DSG deficit of more than 1% as at the end of any financial year.

19. With effect from 2020-21, the department further updated the rules governing deficits and expanded the requirements around deficits to include a DSG management plan workbook. Which was approved at the January Schools Forum and at Full council on the 23rd February 2021.

	DSG Reserve £ M
2019-20 Brought Forward	(11.350)
2019-20 Early Years Adjustment	0.539
2020-21 Forecast Overspend	(9.032)
2020-21 Forecast DSG Reserve Deficit	(19.843)

Proposals

20. Schools Forum is asked to note the budget monitoring position at the end of January 2021.

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