

Schools Forum

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2023 AT ONLINE MEETING - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS.

Present:

Nikki Barnett, Aileen Bates, Lyssy Bolton, Angela Brennan, Andy Bridewell, Rebecca Carson, Michele Chilcott, Stella Fowler, John Hawkins, Cllr Ross Henning, Graham Nagel-Smith, Nick Norgrove, Lisa Percy (Chair), John Read, Graham Shore (Vice-Chair), Trudy Srawley, Mike Thomas and Catriona Williamson

Also Present:

Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Dominic Muns and Cllr Suzanne Wickham

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager)
Ellen Ghey (Democratic Services Officer)
Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND)
Lisa Pullin (Democratic Services Officer)
Ben Stevens (Sustainability Strategic Lead – High Needs Block)
Marie Taylor (Head of Finance – Children and Education)
Liz Williams (Finance Lead – High Needs Block Sustainability)

30 **Election of Chair**

Nominations were sought for a Chair for the forthcoming year. On the nomination of Graham Shore, seconded by Michele Chilcott, it was:

Resolved:

The Schools Forum elected Lisa Percy as Chair of the Schools Forum for the forthcoming year 2023-24.

31 **Election of Vice Chair**

Nominations were sought for a Vice-Chair for the forthcoming year. On the nomination of Lisa Percy, seconded by Catriona Williamson, it was:

Resolved:

The Schools Forum elected Graham Shore as Vice-Chair of the Schools Forum for the forthcoming year 2023-24.

32 **Apologies, Substitutions and Changes of Membership**

Apologies for absence from Members were received from:

- Helen Carpenter
- Georgina Keily-Theobald
- Emma Osmund
- Giles Pugh
- Ros Sutton
- David Whewell

Further apologies were noted from:

- Helean Hughes (Co-Director – Education & Skills)
- Richard Hanks (Co-Director – Education & Skills)
- Lucy Townsend (Corporate Director – People)

The Chair announced the following Membership changes:

- It was confirmed that Helen Carpenter had taken over from Ian Tucker as the Chair of WASHH and the Secondary Academy Representative.
- It was confirmed that Mike Thomas had taken over from Jon Hamp as the Special School Academy Representative.

The Chair welcomed the new Members and thanked Ian Tucker and Jon Hamp for their contributions while a part of the Schools Forum.

33 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 June 2023 were presented for consideration.

Following which, it was:

Resolved

The Schools Forum approved and signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 June 2023 as a true and correct record.

34 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements:

- Liz Williams was welcomed back to the Schools Forum after rejoining Wiltshire Council as the Finance Lead – High Needs Block Sustainability.
- Depending on the length of the meeting, a comfort break may be had at an appropriate time.

35 **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

36 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

37 **Updates from Working Groups**

The Chair raised the update from the last joint meeting of the School Funding and SEN Working Group held on 25 September 2023. There being no questions or comments on the updates, it was then:

Resolved:

The Schools Forum noted the update from the last joint meeting of the School Funding and SEN Working Group held on 25 September 2023.

38 **Wiltshire Schools Forum Proportionality, Membership and Terms of Reference**

A report on the Wiltshire Schools Forum Proportionality, Membership and Terms of Reference was presented by Lisa Pullin, Democratic Services Officer.

Members were reminded that the Membership of the Schools Forum was reviewed on an annual basis, with all those who make appointments of named representatives being asked to confirm those persons for the ensuing academic year. As such, it was confirmed that on 25 August 2023, officers had conducted a review of the balance of Membership between Maintained Primary Schools, Maintained Secondary Schools and Academies, and Special School Members. This showed that the current Membership would not need to be amended as it reflected the current breakdown of the total numbers on roll in schools as at the October 2022 census and updated for Academy conversions.

Furthermore, the Terms of Reference of Schools Forum were last reviewed by the Forum at their meeting on 6 October 2022, and subsequently approved by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills on 4 January 2023. As there were no changes to the proportionality, it was proposed that no changes to the Terms of Reference were required.

Following which, it was:

Resolved:

- a) **The Schools Forum noted that the proportionality of the Forum had been reviewed and that no changes were recommended.**
- b) **The Schools Forum noted that no changes to the Terms of Reference as at 4 January 2023 were recommended.**
- c) **The Schools Forum noted the current Membership details of the Forum.**

d) The Schools Forum recommended that any vacancies for Schools Forum be appointed to.

39 **School Revenue Surplus and Deficit Balances 2022-23**

Grant Davis, Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager, referred to the report which presented the position of revenue balances for Wiltshire maintained schools as at 31 March 2023, and identified those in surplus and deficit. The following was highlighted:

- The net surplus balances for the financial year 2022/23 were confirmed as £12.2m with 104 schools holding surplus balances of £14.4m and 12 schools in deficit to a value of £2.2m.
- When comparing the figures to those of last year, it was confirmed that there had been a slight reduction in the net surplus balances of £1.1m. However, the number of Local Authority (LA) maintained schools had decreased from 126 to 123 over the period of 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the data did not include those schools which had converted to academies during the financial year.
- Paragraph 5 of the report was highlighted which presented a breakdown of the movement in net revenue balances over the last 3 financial years and showed that the balances were generally coming down across Primary, Secondary, and Special schools over that period.
- Appendix 1 of the report was then highlighted which showed a breakdown of all individual maintained schools' revenue surplus and deficit balances. It was noted that there were two trigger points in which the Department for Education (DfE) could request further information from LAs and these were detailed in Paragraph 8 of the report.
- Appendix 2 of the report was then raised which analysed the 2022/23 maintained schools' revenue balances to categorise those that were in surplus and above 15% of their school budget share, those in surplus but below 15% of their school budget share, and those in deficit. As such, it was highlighted that there were 40 schools in the first category, 64 in the second, and 12 in the third, giving an indicative position across the maintained schools sector.
- Appendix 3 of the report was then raised, and it was noted that an investigation could be triggered by the DfE as per Paragraph 8a of the report, as there were 13 schools that had held a revenue balance of 15% or more of their school budget share over the past 5 years.
- Appendix 4 of the report was then raised, and it was noted that an investigation could be triggered by the DfE as per Paragraph 8b of the report, as there were 4 schools that had held deficit balances of more than 2.5% and £10,000 over the past 4 years.
- Paragraphs 12 through 16 of the report were then noted as the key points for the Schools Forum to consider, with Paragraph 17 detailing the indicative position for 2023-24.

In response to a question, it was explained that Abbeyfield School was in deficit which had built up due to tight school funding and investments made to accommodate an anticipated growth in pupil numbers which did not come to fruition over 5 years ago. Furthermore, it was highlighted that Abbeyfield School was a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) school which led to non-controllable higher costs in rental, facilities management, and day-to-day operations. Therefore, officers commended the hard work undertaken by the school's staff team in reducing the deficit figure.

Following which, it was:

Resolved:

The Schools Forum noted the report.

40 **Dedicated Schools Budget - Budget Monitoring 2023-24**

Marie Taylor, Head of Finance – Children and Education, referred to the report which presented the budget monitoring information against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the financial year 2023-24 as at 31 August 2023. The following was highlighted:

- It was noted that an overspend of £1.971m across all four Blocks of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was forecast against the overall schools budget, with the main driver for the variance being the ongoing pressures on the High Needs Block (HNB). This was noted as being in addition to the planned DSG deficit reserve transfer of £16.648m.
- Paragraphs 4 to 6 of the report, including Table 1, was explained and it was noted that the strategy deployed by officers allowed for tighter budget monitoring and to hold more budget managers to account.
- Each of the individual Blocks were then raised, in the order that they were detailed in the report.
- It was noted that the Early Years Block budgets were projected to underspend by £0.157m, with the budgets having been decreased by the planned transfer to the DSG reserve. Thus, facilitating improved budget monitoring and reflecting the Department for Education's (DfE) post-year adjustment of the variance. Paragraphs 8 to 9 of the report were then detailed, and it was highlighted that the post-year adjustment to the 2022/23 financial year resulted in an uplift of £35,133, and, the in-year adjustment for the 2023/24 financial year had resulted in an uplift of £77,322, both of which were welcomed by officers.
- The table in Paragraph 8 was highlighted, with officers drawing attention to the Inclusion Support Funding (ISF). It was explained that officers had changed the way in which ISF had been allocated to better reflect children's needs with more children getting a lower-level grant.

- The HNB budgets were then detailed, and it was noted that the projected overspend was £2.211m, with the budgets being increased by the planned drawdown from the DSG reserve to facilitate improved budget monitoring, target setting, and methods of measuring success in respect of recovery planning.
- Paragraphs 12 to 13, including both tables, were then explained.
- The DSG reserve and management plan were detailed as per Paragraphs 15 to 18 of the report.

Following which, it was:

Resolved:

The Schools Forum noted the forecast budget monitoring position including the balance on the Dedicated Schools Grant reserve at the end of August 2023, together with the update on the High Needs Block recovery plan and Safety Valve programme.

41 **Update on High Needs Sustainability: the Safety Valve Programme**

Liz Williams, Finance Lead – High Needs Block Sustainability, presented an introduction to the Safety Valve Programme; the slides of which can be found attached to these minutes. The following was highlighted:

- It was explained that the previous meeting of the Schools Forum had received an update on the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Programme. In the time since the last meeting, Members were informed that Wiltshire Council had received an invitation to join the Department of Education's (DfE) Safety Valve Programme which was a different level of intervention from the DBV Programme. As such, work on the DBV Programme had now ceased in place of the Safety Valve Programme.
- Members were given context behind the High Needs Block (HNB) from a national perspective, as per Slide 1 of the presentation.
- Slide 2 provided a Wiltshire Council specific perspective in respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit and linked to the figures as detailed within the previous Agenda Item, Dedicated Schools Budget – Budget Monitoring 2023-24. It was noted that Wiltshire Council's cumulative DSG deficit of £35.2m at the end of the 2022/23 financial year had triggered the DfE to look into incorporating Wiltshire into the Safety Valve Programme.
- Slide 3 went into the reasons for deficit, analysing the expenditure and activity against the HNB, and how it correlated with the data gleaned through the DBV High Impact Analysis.
- Slide 4 went through the current DSG Management Plan and it was noted that the table in the slide was the same as that in the Appendix of the previous Agenda Item's report. It was further noted that the figures had been updated since the previous meeting of the Schools Forum to

bring the income assumptions in line with the indicative settlement for the HNB for the next financial year and future years. Furthermore, forecast activity had also been updated in line with current growth trends and mitigations such as place sufficiency and alternative provisions, to provide a more informed forecast of activity within the plan. However, officers acknowledged that further improvements and work was needed to continue reducing the mitigated deficit for the future.

- The differences between the two DfE Intervention Programmes that could support Councils in deficit (DBV and Safety Valve) were detailed as per Slide 5.
- Slides 6 and 7 detailed what the DfE would commit to within the Safety Valve, and what the Council needed to commit to during the process.
- Slide 8 displayed a graphic showing Wiltshire Council's approach to the Safety Valve Programme to transform the High Needs System and Slide 9 detailed the priority workstreams for High Needs Sustainability that would feed into the Safety Valve work.
- Slide 10 posed some 'asks' for the Schools Forum:
 - For two nominees from the Forum to be a part of the Programme Board to represent schools in Wiltshire and to consider creating a smaller Task and Finish Group to focus on the Safety Valve Programme from a schooling perspective to help provide assurance to the wider Board.
 - Some suggestions to support the planned half-day co-design workshop in November for Schools Forum Members.
 - To fill in the survey as detailed on the slide and to share it with colleagues.

In response to a question on Slide 10, it was confirmed that Governors were also welcome to be involved in the Programme Board. Furthermore, officers confirmed that one purpose of including School Forum Members in the workshops and Programme Board was to understand the root causes of the issues driving the overspend within the HNB in Wiltshire and to aid in finding solutions that worked for Wiltshire, by drawing on Members' professional knowledge, expertise, and experiences.

The Chair suggested that all Members who wished to be part of the programme moving forward, contact the Democratic Services Officer, Lisa Pullin.

Following which, it was:

Resolved:

The Schools Forum noted the update on the Safety Valve Programme.

Marie Taylor, Head of Finance – Children and Education, referred to the report which presented a series of Department for Education (DfE) Early Years Publications issued in July 2023. The following was highlighted:

Spring Budget 2023 Childcare Expansion

- Paragraphs 2 to 9 of the report were detailed, the highlights of which being:
 - Funded childcare hours would be extended to children of eligible working parents in England from nine months old to support increased parental engagement in the labour market.
 - The measures would expand the existing system by offering a phased rollout by September 2025 of up to 30 funded hours per week over 38 weeks of the year to children aged nine months and over whose parents met the same income eligibility criteria as applied to the existing 30 hours entitlement for three and four-year olds.
 - The changes were aimed to increase flexibility for providers and the availability of childcare provisions for parents by changing staff-to-child ratios for 2-year-olds and allowing childminders to care for more than the specified amount of three young children, subject to conditions.
 - By the 2027/28 financial year, the national investment was due to rise to £4.1m from £1.74m for the 2024/25 financial year.
 - A new national wraparound childcare pathfinder scheme was being launched with the aim of allowing all parents of primary-aged children in England to access care in schools from 8am – 6pm. £289m in start-up funding would be invested nationally to enable schools and Local Authorities (LAs) to test options of increasing wraparound childcare, with the national rollout due over the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years.

Early Years Supplementary Grant 2023-24

- Paragraphs 10 to 13 of the report were detailed, the highlights of which being:
 - As the expansion plans were to be rolled out from September 2023, a separate mechanism of funding was put in place to facilitate a timely rollout.
 - Wiltshire's allocation of the £204m supplementary grant funding to LAs for the 2023-24 financial year was £1.642m and would provide supplementary funding for all existing early years funding streams as listed in Paragraph 11.
 - The supplementary funding was separate to the funding provided through the Early Years Block of the DSG for the existing entitlements in the 2023-24 financial year.

- Wiltshire was one of the 42 LAs for whom there was a reduction in the 2024-25 illustrative hourly rate with a £0.26 reduction (3.4%) per hour from the effective combined rate.

Early Years Funding – Extension of the Entitlements – Government Consultation

- Paragraphs 14 to 19 of the report were detailed, the highlights of which being:
 - The DfE launched a consultation that ran from 21 July to 8 September 2023 requesting views from LAs, early years providers, and sector representative bodies on a number of proposals regarding the approach to funding for the early years entitlements for 2-year-olds and under from 2024-25, as listed in the report.
 - Wiltshire responded to the consultation and shared the response with the Early Years Sector and Reference Group.
 - Appendix 1 of the report detailed Wiltshire’s responses.

Following which, it was:

Resolved:

The Schools Forum noted the three July 2023 publications from the Department of Education and considered the implications for Wiltshire.

43 **National Funding Formulae for Schools and High Needs - 2024-25**

Grant Davis, Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager, referred to the report which outlined the Department for Education (DfE) funding proposals for schools and high needs in 2024-25, which were published in July 2023. It was emphasised that the report was being presented to draw the Forum’s attention to the proposals rather than for consultation and decision making, as all funding decisions related to the 2024-25 year would be taken following the announcement of the 2024-25 funding settlement. The following was then highlighted:

- Paragraphs 3 to 7 of the report provided some background to the report with regard to the Government’s pledges to increase core school funding in 2023-24 and 2024-25 following the additional school funding awarded during 2020-21 and 2022-23.
- Paragraphs 8 to 15 detailed the funding proposals for 2024-25 and it was noted that the 2024-25 year would be the second transition towards the direct schools National Funding Formula (NFF). It was highlighted that Wiltshire’s local school formula already mirrored the NFF and so any future tightening of the formula would have a minimal impact upon Wiltshire schools.

- The table in Paragraph 11 was highlighted as showing the indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Block allocations, based upon October 2022 census data. However, it was noted that the Early Years Block figures had been replicated from the 2023-24 allocation to provide a view of the overall quantum of funding for 2024-25, as the Block was still subject to further work by the DfE and in-year changes.
- Paragraph 12 listed the changes to the 2024-25 funding formula from the 2023-24 formula, and Appendix 1 highlighted some of the subtle key changes to the funding criteria of the NFF.
- Officers confirmed that Schools Forum Members would continue to retain their role in determining the school funding allocation methodology. However, Members were reminded that the Government had confirmed its intention to move to a single direct NFF by 2027-28 and would therefore have the ability to determine every school's budget centrally.
- Paragraph 16 set out a table detailing the NFF funding values for schools for the 2024-25 year.
- Members were informed that a number of funding decisions that the Forum had made for the 2023-24 year would have to be taken for the 2024-25 year, as listed in Paragraph 17 of the report.
- The budget setting process for 2024-25 was then detailed, with the calculation shown in Paragraph 21 of the report.
- Growth Funding, Initial Modelling, De-Delegation, and Notional SEN were then explained, as per Paragraphs 22 to 27 of the report. The highlights of which being:
 - The level of Growth Funding required, and the size of the Growth Fund for 2024-25, would be determined later in the year with confirmation of the Growth Funding criteria, to ensure compliance with the NFF criteria.
 - Initial modelling of the Schools Block demonstrated that the NFF was affordable and therefore the full NFF could be implemented, based on the October 2022 census data.
 - Schools Forum would take any de-delegation decisions on behalf of maintained schools, based upon the results of the consultation responses. Furthermore, maintained schools voting Members had agreed that de-delegation of services would continue as it had in 2022-23 and previous years, and included the de-delegation of funding to support School Improvement Services.
 - Mainstream schools and Academies would continue to receive the Notional SEN budget and would be expected to use this budget to meet the needs of pupils with low cost, high incidence SEN and to contribute the first £6,000 of provision for all pupils with high needs.
- Appendix 1 of the report was then highlighted, and officers explained in further detail: Exceptional Circumstances, Growth Funding, Falling Rolls Funding, Notional SEN, and Split Site Funding, as per the relevant Paragraphs within the Appendix.

- It was then confirmed that a Disapplication Request had been submitted to the DfE, as in previous years, under funding for 'Exceptional Circumstances'. The Disapplication relates to those schools that don't have facilities for holding whole school events and were required to hire village halls, playing fields and so forth. Whilst the DfE had set the threshold of the rental being greater than 1% of the schools budget, it was confirmed that Wiltshire would request setting the threshold at 0.75% of the schools budget share.
- Members were then asked to consider the following:
 - a) Under the funding guidance for 2023-24, the Schools Forum would continue to be able to transfer up to 0.5% of their Schools Block allocation to other Blocks of the Dedicated Schools Grant if they so wished.
 - b) As Wiltshire already mirrored the National Funding Formula (NFF), alongside over 66% of Local Authorities in England, a decision regarding continuing to follow the NFF would need to be confirmed, however Members were informed that no impact from the tightening requirements was likely to be felt in Wiltshire if that decision was agreed.

Following which, it was:

Resolved:

The Schools Forum noted the content of the report.

Post meeting note:

Following the meeting, on the 6 October 2023, the Department for Education announced that an unforeseen error had occurred in the calculation of 'School' funding for the 2024-25 year. Incorrect pupil forecasts had been used to calculate the school funding rates and as a result, Wiltshire would see a reduction in the Schools Block funding of £3.3m; approximately 1% of the Schools Block. Full details and a revised report will therefore be presented at the next meeting of the Schools Forum on 5 December 2023. A letter from the Permanent Secretary to the Chair of the Education Select Committee confirming this information is attached to these minutes.

Attachment – Letter

44 **Confirmation of Dates for Future Meetings**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 5 December 2023 at 1.30pm and was planned to be held in person at County Hall, Trowbridge.

Future meeting dates were confirmed as below:

18 January 2024 – 1.30pm
14 March 2024 – 1.30pm
27 June 2024 – 1.30pm
10 October 2024 – 1.30pm

45 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30 - 3.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Ellen Ghey, of Democratic Services,
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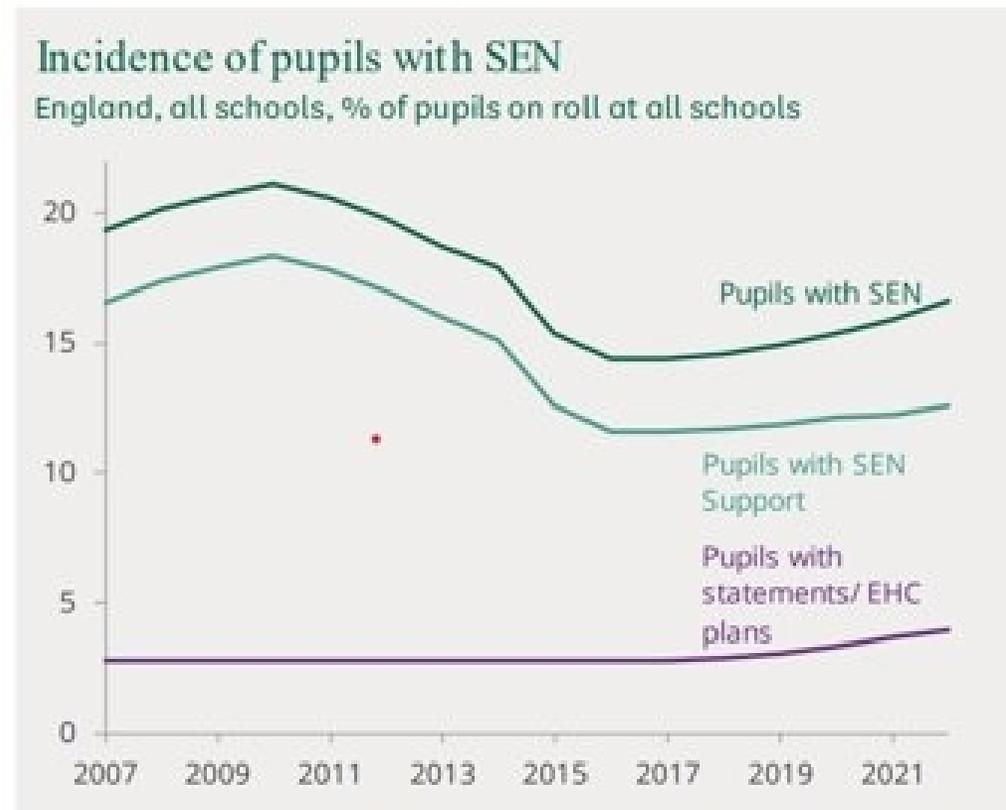
Safety Valve – *Wiltshire Approach*

Schools Forum
5 October 2023

Background and Context

- The High Needs Block, which is specifically to help children and young people who have Special Educational Needs (SEN), is part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocated to the Council.
- Over two thirds of councils in England are overspending against their High Needs Block as demand increases.
- In 2022, ADCS estimated the total deficit across all councils was £2.6bn.
- This growth is down to multiple factors, including a change in assessment criteria and a growth in the number of Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

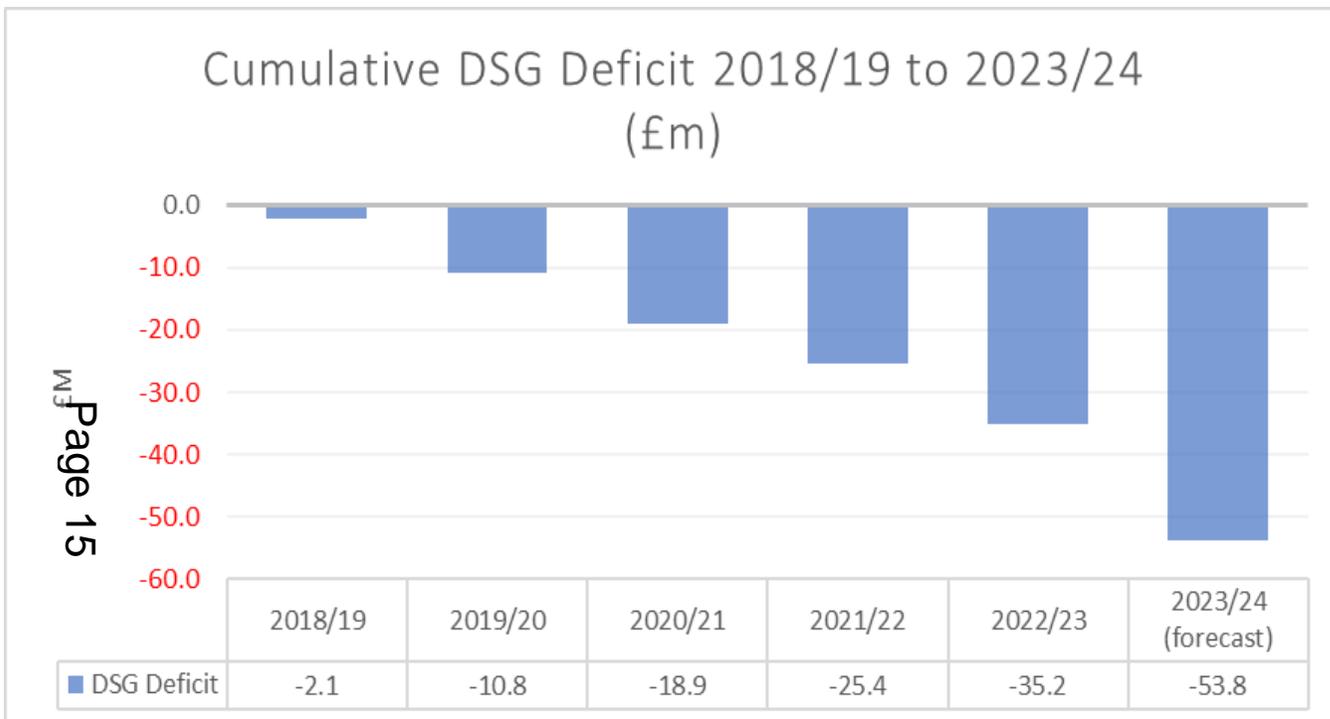
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Note: As of January in each year.

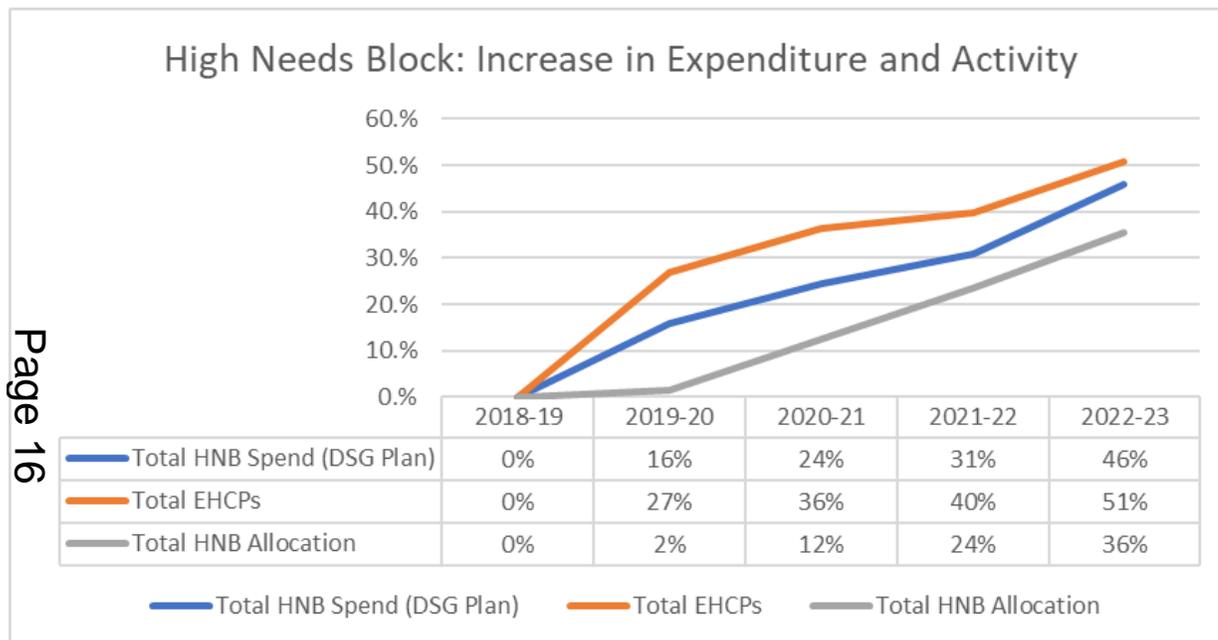
Source: DfE, [Special Educational Needs in England: 2022, June 2022](#); DfE, [Special Educational Needs in England: 2019, July 2019](#) (for all data prior to 2020, Table 1)

Wiltshire DSG Deficit



- At the end of the 2022/23 financial year the Council had a cumulative DSG deficit of £35.2m. This deficit is held on the council’s balance sheet as a negative reserve.
- The updated forecast for the current financial year projects that the deficit will increase to £53.8m by April 2024.
- In recent years, the deficit has been mitigated by an underspend against the Early Years Block meaning that the annual High Needs overspend is higher
- A “statutory override” is currently in place meaning the deficit does not impact on the council’s general fund. This is due to cease at the end of 2025/26, at which point the council will be expected to have set aside sufficient reserves to offset the deficit

Reasons for Deficit: Analysis of Expenditure and Activity



- Total expenditure against the high needs block increased by 46% from 2018-19 to 2022-23
- The number of EHCPs increased by 51% over the same time period.
- Income from the High Needs Block increased by 36% over that period
- This supports the data from the DBV High Impact Analysis that it is caseloads rather than unit cost driving the spend

Data source:
 Expenditure – section 251 outturn returns 2018/19 to 2022/23
 Activity – SEN2 Returns

DSG Management Plan

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Planned DSG position (surplus)/deficit	£10,812	£18,907	£25,409	£35,214	£53,832	£66,011	£79,585	£96,206	£118,501	£145,959	£178,912

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
In year net position deficit / (surplus)											
Schools block	-£218,085	-£2,837,284	-£945,068	-£1,220,601	-£89,668	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Central schools services block	-£262,973	-£67,651	£169,731	-£292,731	£6,085	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Early years block	£542,741	-£505,787	-£2,445,638	-£2,180,601	-£2,406,555	-£123,892	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
High needs block	£8,470,047	£11,505,753	£9,722,968	£13,499,064	£21,108,718	£12,302,108	£13,573,967	£16,621,750	£22,294,453	£27,457,919	£32,953,580
Total net	£8,531,730	£8,095,031	£6,501,993	£9,805,131	£18,618,580	£12,178,216	£13,573,967	£16,621,750	£22,294,453	£27,457,919	£32,953,580

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Other											
Council contribution (negative)	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Add brought forward deficit / (surplus) (net)	£2,279,880	£10,811,610	£18,906,641	£25,408,634	£35,213,765	£53,832,345	£66,010,562	£79,584,529	£96,206,279	£118,500,732	£145,958,651
Planned year end position	£10,811,610	£18,906,641	£25,408,634	£35,213,765	£53,832,345	£66,010,562	£79,584,529	£96,206,279	£118,500,732	£145,958,651	£178,912,231

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- The updated draft plan shows that by April 2030 the mitigated deficit could reach **£178.9m**
- Forecast activity has been revised during August and is based on the current growth trends and mitigations. Expenditure reflects the planned mitigations and latest forecast for this year.
 - The mitigations currently included in the plan are based on planned increases in places across Wiltshire's special school and resource base provision
 - There are less well-defined mitigations in the plan relating to demand management and support for mainstream inclusion
 - The DfE has 2 main programmes in place to support councils to achieve sustainable high needs systems and reduce DSG deficits

DfE Intervention Programmes to Support Councils in Deficit

Delivering Better Value in SEND	Safety Valve
Support from Newton (Europe) Ltd consultants to analyse data and produce initial forecasts (Module 1) – August 2023	Initial challenge from CIPFA and DfE to review current forecasts and planned mitigations - Existing plan to be submitted by end of August for review
Module 2 – Root cause diagnostic to identify and quantify highest impact actions - September 2023	Work to develop revised DSG Management Plan to achieve in year financial balance over 5-7 year period
Module 3 – implementation planning – Oct to December 2023. Submit plan December	New draft plan to be submitted by 15 th December, new final plan by 12 th January, to be signed by SoS and Wiltshire in Feb/March
Outcome – application for £1m grant to support implementation of the plan	Outcome – 5-7 year agreement signed off with the DfE for council to achieve in year financial balance and DfE to provide additional DSG to “write off” legacy deficit
Focus on improved outcomes and financial sustainability	Focus on deficit reduction and improved outcomes

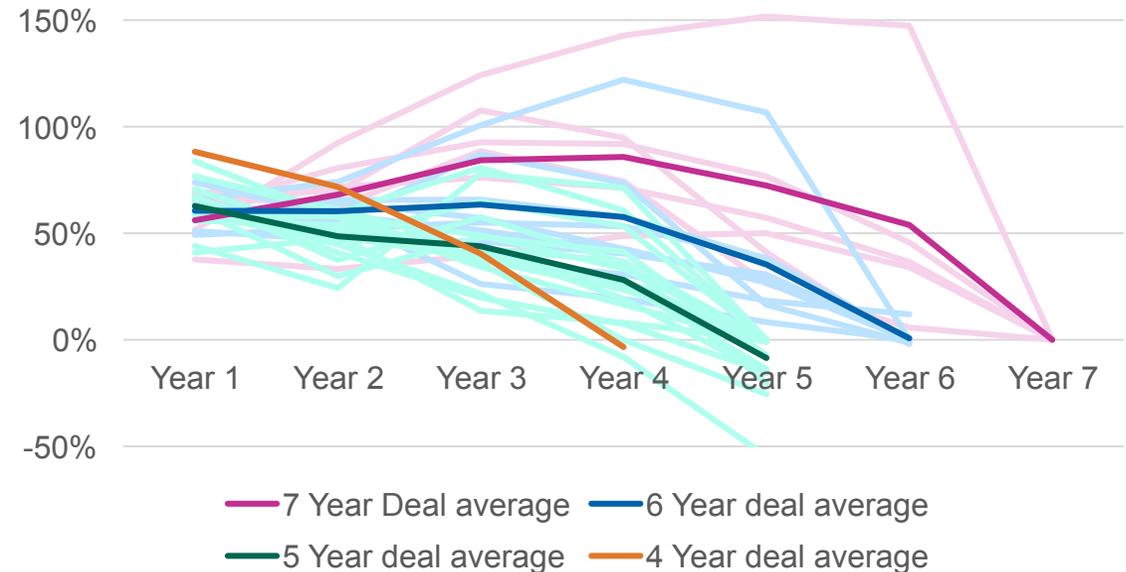
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Safety Valve Deals – Department of Education

- Deals will provide additional DSG as extra revenue to pay down the DSG deficit and support implementation. (a review of other SV deals suggests contributions average (median) around 10% of total DSG)
- Capital investment can be made available as part of these deals if the DfE is satisfied it is integral to the plan
- Average payment in year 1 is 40-45% of the DSG deficit
- Realistic profiling of deficit allows time before impact of the interventions is felt

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Safety Valve Deals – Net DSG Deficit as a % of the original



Safety Valve Deals – Wiltshire Council

- Wiltshire Council will commit to delivering a plan that will bring us back to a balanced position in year over the period of the deal.
- We will agree to the intense scrutiny and monitoring that will follow the deal.
- No expectation that we commit our own money if balance can be achieved and DfE maximum contribution not exceeded

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Our approach in Wiltshire



Safety Valve is about embracing transformation



Wiltshire Council and our values won't change.



Co-design is key to our approach



Priority Workstreams for High Needs Sustainability

- 1 Improving support pre-EHCP to increase parental confidence and mainstream inclusion
- 2 Preventing the need for escalation of support by ensuring the right support, first time
- 3 Ensuring value for money and the right contributions from partners
- 4 Enhance transition pathways to provide a range of opportunities to prepare for adulthood
- 5 Developing better communication and processes to change the culture in our SEND system

3 asks for Schools Forum...

- Our Programme Board meets every 4 weeks on a Thursday morning – we would like to include two nominees from Schools Forum to provide that school voice. We would also welcome a Task and Finish Group to focus on this more regularly and provide assurance to the wider group
- We are planning a half-day co-design workshop in November for School's Forum Members – we would welcome suggestions and support in making that successful.
- There is a survey currently live that will help us collect views on how the system is working from education and health professionals. We would encourage you to fill the survey in, and to share it with colleagues. The survey can be accessed through <https://surveys.wiltshire.gov.uk/s/g498uz> or through this QR code:



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Permanent Secretary

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0207 340 7414 permanent.secretary@education.gov.uk

Robin Walker MP
Chair, Education Select Committee
SENT VIA EMAIL

6 October 2023

Dear Robin,

National Funding Formula Update

I am writing to inform you that we will be updating the schools national funding formula (NFF) for 2024-25 later this afternoon.

We published the schools NFF for 2024-25 in July. However, we have uncovered an error made by DfE officials during the initial calculations of the NFF. Specifically, there was an error processing forecast pupil numbers, which means that the overall cost of the Core Schools Budget would be 0.62% greater than allocated. We will therefore be issuing new NFF allocations to correct that error while continuing to deliver, in full, the £59.6bn Core Schools Budget that has been promised.

I apologise for this error. The Secretary of State has asked me to conduct a formal review of the quality assurance process surrounding the calculation of the NFF, with independent scrutiny. Improvements have already been identified to ensure similar mistakes are not repeated in the future.

The recalculation of funding does not affect the total amount we plan to spend in the Core Schools Budget in 2024-25 - which includes funding for mainstream schools, and funding for high needs. It will remain at £59.6bn in 2024-25, the highest ever in real terms per pupil. This is a percentage increase from 2023-24 of 3.2%, and will properly fund the teacher pay increase agreed in 2023.

The recalculated funding is at record levels, at an average of £5,300 per primary school pupil and £6,830 per secondary school pupil in 2024-25, up from £5,200 and £6,720 respectively in 2023-24. The 2024-25 high needs NFF allocations (which fund provision for children with complex SEND) are unaffected, as are other funding streams outside the NFF, including the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant announced in the summer.

Schools have not yet received their 2024-25 funding – so the correction of this error does not mean adjusting any funding that schools have already received. Likewise, the error will not impact on the publication of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in December, or when schools will receive their final allocations for 2024-25.

Nevertheless, we recognise that the correction of this error will be difficult for local authorities and frustrating for some school leaders, which is why the Department has worked as quickly as possible to rectify the error. We will work closely with school stakeholders, including unions, to communicate this change and support schools and local authorities.

The documents which will be updated and replaced with new versions today are:

- The policy document for the 2024-25 NFF, which is available on: [National funding formula for schools and high needs - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/national-funding-formula-for-schools-and-high-needs)
- The “national funding formula: summary table”, and the “impact of the schools NFF” tables, published on: [National funding formula tables for schools and high needs: 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/tables/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs-2024-to-2025)

I expect you will have further questions on the re-publication of the NFF once it has been issued, and look forward to discussing them with you in due course.

Again, I would want to express my sincere apologies that this error has occurred, and reassure you that rigorous measures are being put in place to ensure that it will not be repeated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Acland-Hood', written in a cursive style.

**SUSAN ACLAND-HOOD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**



Permanent Secretary

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