

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

21 January 2025

Subject: Safety Valve agreement update & Schools Block transfer

Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Clewer - Leader of the Council
Councillor Laura Mayes - Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, and Skills
Councillor Jane Davies - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion
Councillor Nick Botterill - Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Key Decision: Non-Key

Executive Summary

The High Needs Block (HNB) is the part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that primarily supports pupils who have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), and approximately two thirds of councils in England have some level of deficit in their HNB.

On the 12 March 2024, Wiltshire Council signed a Safety Valve agreement with the Department for Education (DfE). This agreement is supported by the High Needs Block Sustainability Plan which was created with parent carers, schools and settings, and health and care professionals.

As was reported to Cabinet in September, while the activity to support the plan is broadly on track, the financial limits are not being met and consequently the agreement has been marked as off track. Appendix 1 is the monitoring report for November 2024 which reflects the Q2 budget monitoring position that went to Cabinet on 19 November, this forecasts a £17.49m overspend, on top of the £28.25m overspend included in the original plan.

The data shows that the increased spend in the current year is driven primarily by increased activity rather than by unit cost in most types of provision. This is reflected in the SEND service data which shows that, at the end of December, the number of EHCPs in the system was 6,354 - 660 ahead of the figure suggested by the original Safety Valve Plan.

Clearly this puts the plan far enough off track that significant changes are required. A draft of these changes, subject to Cabinet approval, was submitted to the DfE in December. These changes, contained in Appendix 2, set out further proposals that have been worked up so that an in-year balanced position can be achieved. These proposals will follow the principles set out in the original plan – investing to save in future years and improving support for children and young people with additional needs across the system.

It is now thought that the earliest a balanced position is achievable, without compromising the support given to the children and young people with SEND, is April 2031 (seven years from the start of the plan) instead of April 2029 as originally forecast. This reflects the higher number of EHCPs in the system, higher number of Independent Sector Placements, and consequent work that is required to address the overspend.

The decision to amend the Safety Valve agreement is not for the Council to make unilaterally, and agreement will need to be sought from the DfE.

One minor change to the plan submitted to the DfE in December was the amount that the council is requesting to transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. Local authorities in England can transfer up to 0.5% of the schools block into the high needs block with the agreement of Schools Forum, but the original plan anticipated a 1% transfer.

The council had to submit a draft request to the Secretary of State in November 2024 and then consulted schools on a 1% transfer. While there was support for some level of block transfer, a significant majority were against that transfer being 1%.

School's Forum met on the 12th December 2024 and voted in line with the consultation responses and officer recommendation, agreeing to a transfer of the maximum amount of money that would be affordable without impacting National Funding Formula rates for individual schools. This was what was done in 2024/25, and that percentage figure was 0.55% (£2m), and a similar amount was expected this year.

Based on this, the revised plan submitted to the DfE, assumed a 0.5% transfer however in this coming year the percentage figure that maintains school budgets without impacting the National Funding Formula is 0.24% reflecting the lower uplift in school funding. This is £1.022m less than the figure submitted in December.

The council needs to decide whether to uphold the draft request and pursue a 1% transfer, despite the objections of Schools Forum, or make a change to the SEND Sustainability Plan which Cabinet endorsed last year and put forward another percentage figure.

If the council and School's Forum are not in agreement, then the Secretary of State makes the final decision. School's Forum meet again on the 23rd January.

Proposals

- 1) That Cabinet endorse the draft revised plan submitted to the DfE in December, including the new timeline and the interventions set out within it.

That Cabinet approve:

- 2) The Corporate Director for Children and Education, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members, to seek agreement for the revised plan from the Department for Education.

- 3) An adjustment to the plan which was submitted to the DfE in January 2024, and revised in December 2024, to request a block transfer of the maximum amount that can be transferred without impacting school budgets (estimated at 0.24%)

Reason for Proposals

Delivery of the SEND Sustainability Plan is vital to removing the DSG deficit, and related financial risk, from the council and bringing DSG into an in year balance position. Having a realistic plan, over seven years, enables the authority to do this in a structured way that does not compromise on the quality of support given to children and young people with SEND.

Delivery of the plan relies on schools and headteachers working effectively with the local authority and continuing to build a more sustainable system. Given the strength of feeling over the School's Block transfer, and the uncertainty about whether a request for a 1% transfer would be granted by the Secretary of State without Schools Forum approval, it is felt that maintaining the relationships with schools is paramount and a change required to that assumed and included previously.

Lucy Townsend
Chief Executive Officer

Wiltshire Council

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Key Decision: Non-Key

Purpose of Report

1. To update Cabinet on the draft revised SEND Sustainability plan which was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in December.
2. To seek agreement on the changes proposed to the plan, including a change to the length of the plan, and for the interventions that are contained within the plan.
3. To seek agreement on the percentage transfer from the School's Block to the High Needs Block and that a letter should be written to the Secretary of State explaining this change.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

4. This decision relates to the Safety Valve agreement which will ensure that the Dedicated Schools Grant will be brought back into a balanced position. This is a significant financial risk and so removing it will support the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Business Plan.
5. The deliver of the Safety Valve agreement will also provide better outcomes for children with SEND in Wiltshire, supporting the following Business Plan priorities:
 - Resilient Communities
 - Empowered People
 - Thriving Economy

Background

6. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is funding which local authorities in England receive to support schools. The DSG is split into four blocks which support different parts of the schools and education system.
7. One of these blocks is the High Needs Block which is used to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

8. Since 2018/19 the High Needs Block has been under increasing pressure. This growth in expenditure has been seen in every council in England, and Wiltshire is no exception.
9. This growth is the result of changing practice following The Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Regulations 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015 which introduced new statutory obligations for local authorities in England in how they support children and young people with SEND.
10. In Wiltshire from 2018/19 to 2022/23, this equated to a 51% growth in the number of children supported by an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and a 46% growth in the amount of money being spent from the High Needs Block. Over the same period, the money received into the High Needs Block from government only grew by 36%. The Association of Directors of Children's Services estimate that, as of 2022, this was a £2.6bn issue across England.
11. While High Needs Block income has not kept pace with the growth in demand, there are also changes that councils can make to respond to the new strategic context.
12. This issue has received some attention over recent years, and this is reflected in the introduction by government of a statutory override. This override allows councils to hold their DSG deficit as a negative reserve on their balance sheet, walled off from the rest of the council's finances. This statutory override, however, is due to expire 31st March 2026 and at that point, councils will be expected to make good any remaining deficit that has not been previously addressed.
13. The Wiltshire Council DSG deficit forecast suggests that, by April 2026, the cumulative unmitigated deficit could be £117m while the current forecast total general fund and earmarked reserves are £90m.
14. The invitation from DfE to join the Safety Valve programme was received in August 2023 and an initial meeting with the Department for Education was held in early October 2023. The plan was submitted in draft form on December 15th, it was then amended and resubmitted on January 12th 2024.
15. Further negotiations were held between the council and the DfE to ensure a mutually agreeable position. This agreement received ministerial approval and was signed on behalf of Wiltshire Council on 12th of March.
16. The agreement sets out commitments from the DfE and from Wiltshire Council. The DfE has committed to give Wiltshire Council an additional £67m over the 5 years of the agreement. These contributions are paid in instalments, profiled as follows:

Year	The Department agrees to pay to the authority an additional £m of DSG by year end
2023/24	£26.8m
2024/25	£6.7m
2025/26	£6.7m
2026/27	£6.7m

2027/28	£6.7m
2028/29	£13.4m

17. In addition, the council has agreed to regular monitoring, 3 times a year, to check on progress. The DfE will expect the council to report against the key conditions of the agreement, and on progress to deliver capital projects associated with the agreement.

18. These conditions are:

- 1) The authority undertakes to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of 2028/29 and in each subsequent year.
- 2) The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit, not exceeding £84.5m in financial year 2024/25.
- 3.1. Provide earlier support for children and young people with SEND, improving inclusion practices and managing pressure points and school transitions;
- 3.2. Prevent the need for escalation by providing the right support, first time, including a more holistic response alongside health and social care, with improved management and communication;
- 3.3. Increase the number of special school placements, resourced provision, and alternative provision to ensure that children and young people can access the support they need, with proper reintegration support for children who belong in mainstream provision;
- 3.4. Improve transition pathways to provide a range of opportunities for young people with SEND to prepare for adulthood, including training, further education, and employment;
- 3.5. Foster a culture of change across the Wiltshire SEND and AP system by engaging with partners and parent carers, improving trust and coproduction across the sector.

19. In September, it was reported that the August monitoring report was RAG rated “off-track” and that officers would be reviewing and revising the SEND sustainability plan in preparation for the November submission. These revisions were intended to provide assurance to the council, and to the DfE that there is a credible plan to get back on track.

20. Following this submission, the Q2 monitoring report was published and did not show any improvement in the financial position within the High Needs Block.

21. Officers undertook a re-baselining exercise to understand the sustainability challenge and reviewed the current plan to identify the gaps. Service leads from across Education and Skills and Families and Children’s directorates undertook an exercise to see what could be accelerated or re-scoped within the plan to bring the impact forward. New interventions were also developed, with a clear emphasis on measurable and deliverable impacts.

22. The resulting changes, and revised plan, were submitted to the DfE in early December, subject to Cabinet approval.

Main Considerations for the Council

23. As at the end of December, there are 6,354 EHCPs in the Wiltshire SEND system, this is 660 ahead of the forecast suggested by the original Safety Valve Plan. As a result of this increased growth in EHCPs, there are 41 more Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) placements than this time last year. The average cost of a INMSS placement is £35.56k more than one in a maintained special school.
24. These factors are driving an overspend in the High Needs Block of £45.74m. This is £17.49m more than the £28.25m overspend included in the original plan.
25. Appendices 1 and 2 go into greater detail about the reasons for this, and the data insights that have been gathered since the original plan was submitted. In summary, firstly the predictions around how quickly impact would be felt were optimistic. Secondly, the original forecast was based on a 5-year average, which included years where demand was artificially suppressed by COVID-19 and the assumptions about what happens to that demand were also optimistic.
26. There has also been an impact because the council has made significant progress with clearing the EHCNA backlog, ensuring that where children and young people have a level of need which would warrant an EHCP, this is available to them. The result of this is that the backlog is now at its lowest level since 2020, but this has brought more plans forward.
27. Given these factors, the plan has been re-baselined and a new forecast created that maps the existing interventions and impacts onto the revised trajectory. It became clear that, without risking the quality of support that is available to children and young people with SEND, getting to balance in five years would not be possible.
28. Given the commitment that the council rightly shows to maintaining that quality, as highlighted in the recent Ofsted/CQC inspection, officers worked up plans that would reflect the values-based approach which underpins the original SEND Sustainability Plan.
29. To achieve this, an evidence led approach has been taken to understanding what could be achieved in the short term. Given that Wiltshire already has more EHCPs per head of population than many of its statistical neighbours, it is not unreasonable to have an ambition that is based on achieving similar data milestones to statistical neighbours for metrics like EHCNA requests, robust decision making, and ceased plans.
30. Eight short-term interventions have been developed to move Wiltshire towards that target system by April 2026. These are listed in appendix 2, and without this milestone being met, balancing the SEND budget in Wiltshire becomes impossible.
31. All eight interventions place the needs of children and young people at the centre, and are grounded in an invest-to-save approach.
32. These interventions have been mapped onto the revised forecast and officers believe that the earliest time that the High Needs Block could be balanced is March 2031, two years later than originally planned. This would make the SEND sustainability programme a seven year process, rather than the five years originally set out in the Safety Valve Plan.

33. This would leave a £122.5m residual deficit for Wiltshire Council to manage, up from £70.3m in the original plan. This will be a challenge, especially if local government budgets continue to be pressured, as they have been in recent years.
34. Extending the length of the Safety Valve agreement, and adjusting the deficit limits in it, are not steps that the council can take unilaterally and there will need to be further discussion with the DfE. The council should not expect the DfE to increase the contribution they are making as part of the Safety Valve agreement.

School's Block Transfer 2025/26

35. Within the SEND sustainability plan, assumptions were made about the amount of funding that could be transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
36. Local authorities can transfer up to and including 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, with the agreement of their Schools Forum. Where a local authority wishes to transfer more than 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, and/or where agreement has not been reached with Schools Forum, the local authority must seek the agreement of the Secretary of State.
37. In Wiltshire, Schools Forum has recognised the pressures against the high needs block and a transfer of funding from the schools block has historically been agreed, following consultation with schools, each year, where this has been affordable within the 'cash envelope' for school funding and the National Funding Formula (NFF) has been applied in calculating school budgets.
38. In 2024/25 a transfer of £2m, or 0.55%, from the schools block to the high needs block was agreed by Schools Forum and confirmed by the Secretary of State. This was in line with the proposals in the council's High Needs Sustainability Plan.
39. The Safety Valve agreement that the council has in place with the DfE includes an assumption of a transfer of 1% of schools block into high needs block each year from 2025/26 to 2028/29.
40. For this reason, the council has consulted with schools on a proposal for a 1% transfer from schools block into high needs block in the 2025/26 financial year. The consultation opened on 17th October 2024 and closed on 21st November 2024.
41. On 15 November 2024 the council submitted a draft request to the Secretary of State to ensure the deadline, set by the DfE, was not missed. This draft request made it clear that the consultation with schools had not yet closed and that the council would be updating the request once views had been collected from schools.
42. 61 responses to the consultation were received, representing 79 schools across the range of primary and secondary and maintained and multi academy trust. The consultation report is included as Appendix 3.
43. The majority of respondents (66.7%) were in support of a transfer of funding from schools block to high needs block.
44. Of those respondents who supported a transfer of funding, the majority (60.0%) were not in support of the proposal to transfer 1% of schools block. Comments provided by

those respondents indicated majority support for a transfer of 0.5% or a value that would not impact on NFF formula rates.

45. The majority of comments from respondents who voted No to a transfer of funding referred to the financial impact on their schools. Comments also noted existing cost pressures and wider concerns relating to the SEND system.
46. Schools Forum met on the 12th of December to consider the consultation responses and reach a decision about the block transfer. Officers put the full range of options in front of School's Forum and recommended that the consultation response be respected.
47. Schools Forum voted in favour of making a transfer from the school's block to the high needs block set at the highest percentage which would not directly impact school budgets.
48. High Needs Block Sustainability Board met on the 19th December to discuss the issue. The Board recognised the financial pressure on schools, and the vital role that schools will play in the delivery of the sustainability plan. The board also reflected on the financial pressures in the dedicated schools grant and the risk to the council's services if this deficit is not brought under control.
49. However, despite concerns about the impact on the DSG deficit on balance, the High Needs Block agreed with the view from schools as expressed in the decision from Schools Forum.
50. Based on the final DSG funding settlement announced on 18th December it is estimated that the maximum level of transfer from schools block to high needs block will be £0.913m, or 0.24%. This will leave a shortfall to be managed within the revised plan of £1.022m in the 2025/26 financial year.
51. The Council now has two choices:
 - a. Uphold the draft request made to the Secretary of State, pursuing a 1% block transfer without the support of Schools Forum.
 - b. Revise the draft request, in line with the decision of Schools Forum, and request the highest percentage transfer possible without impacting school budgets.

52. The recommendation is that Cabinet, on behalf of Council, select option b and that the S151 officer write to the Secretary of State withdrawing the disapplication request.

Safeguarding Implications

53. There are no direct implications of this decision.

Public Health Implications

54. The schools block supports provision of universal support to all pupils in Wiltshire. This support includes measures designed to prevent ill health among pupils.

55. If schools felt under pressure to cut back on their provision due to budgetary constraints, these preventative measures are likely to be the first thing to be cut to protect frontline teaching posts. The proposal in this paper reduces that likelihood.

Procurement Implications

56. There are no direct implications of this decision.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

57. The high needs block supports children and young people with additional needs, including those with physical disability. While this paper proposes moving less money into the high needs block from the schools block, the risk to those learners is negligible.

58. Further support is being provided to those learners through other elements of the SEND Transformation Programme which will fully mitigate any potential risk.

59. Each project plan within the SEND Transformation Programme has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) tool embedded within it, and full EQIA is undertaken where necessary. The total level of impact is also being monitored.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

60. There are no direct implications of this decision.

Workforce Implications

61. There are no direct implications of this decision.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

62. If the revised plan is not accepted, then there is a risk that the council does not have a credible plan to get the High Needs Block to a balanced position. The council would have to manage a deficit which is increasing exponentially.

63. Should the proposed decision around the Schools Block Transfer not be taken then the existing request to the Secretary of State for a 1% transfer would remain the position of the council. This request, taken against the wishes of Schools Forum and the consultation with schools, would risk the erosion of relationships with education providers in Wiltshire.

64. If the council decided to set itself in direct opposition to the stakeholders who can have the biggest impact on the SEND Sustainability Plan, then this could have a profound and lasting effect on the ability of the council to address the overspend in the dedicated schools grant. While this scenario has not been modelled, it is thought that this would greatly exceed the value of the block transfer.

65. It is also worth noting that the new Secretary of State has indicated that she is less pre-disposed to agreeing block transfers than her predecessor, where the request does not have the support of Schools Forum, and so there is a risk that the council damages relationships with schools and the block transfer is not granted.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

66. There is a risk that the council will see an increase in legal challenge and tribunals arising from the SEND decision making process. This risk is being mitigated through the plan, by ensuring the council is confident in the support being provided to children with SEND, by ensuring that the council has efficient and well defined processes in place. Additionally, the plan is being co-designed with parent carers, schools, early years settings and colleges to create shared ownership and buy-in.
67. Adopting the Schools Block Transfer proposal would concede that less money is being transferred from the schools block to the high needs block to mitigate the significant deficits which are building up in that area. This does increase the financial liability for the council.
68. Adopting the proposal could leave the DfE with the impression that the council is not willing to make tough decisions to address the deficit in the high needs block.
69. The mitigation for both these risks is the revised Sustainability Plan submitted to the DfE. This plan includes further interventions designed to bring the deficit down, and these interventions provide a credible evidence base for the DfE to conclude that the council has an ambitious plan to address the deficit.

Financial Implications

70. The updated sustainability plan is no longer predicting a positive in-year balance by the end of 2028/29. The latest forecast is that a positive in-year balance will be possible by the end of 2030/31 and in subsequent years.

Provision Type	Revised Forecast							
	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
Plan Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Mainstream Provision (incl. Resourced Provision Top Ups)	23,190	25,055	19,512	18,090	16,885	16,003	15,580	14,985
Resourced Provision (places only)	4,249	4,933	5,712	5,582	5,822	6,062	6,302	6,542
Special Schools	28,137	34,504	34,262	37,147	40,333	42,937	45,047	47,072
Independent and Non-maintained Special School Provision	20,263	28,373	26,525	25,111	17,547	5,328	3,480	3,893
Post 16 Provision	11,150	12,193	13,112	12,034	10,379	9,365	8,500	8,106
Alternative Provision	7,980	9,040	9,974	9,319	8,877	8,720	8,520	7,530
Therapies	667	669	873	873	873	873	873	873
Other High Needs Block places and top ups	1,047	1,103	1,087	1,054	1,003	932	840	748
High Needs Block staffing etc	0	6,303	7,693	6,723	6,736	6,749	6,763	6,776
Total Expenditure	96,683	122,172	118,751	115,933	108,455	96,969	95,906	96,527
High Needs Block	-70,798	-74,445	-80,301	-82,710	-85,192	-87,748	-90,380	-93,091
Block Transfer	-1,797	-2,000	-1,937	-3,867	-3,983	-4,102	-4,225	-4,352
In Year Surplus (-)/Deficit(+)	24,088	45,727	36,513	29,356	19,280	5,119	1,301	-917
Blocks	-2,766	-2,531						
Safety Valve Income	-26,800	-6,700	-6,700	-6,700	-6,700	-13,400		
Surplus/Deficit Brought Forward from Previous years	35,214	29,736	66,232	96,045	118,701	131,282	123,001	124,301
Total Deficit Balance	29,736	66,232	96,045	118,701	131,282	123,001	124,301	123,385

71. This would leave a £123.4m residual deficit for Wiltshire Council to manage, up from £70.3m in the original plan. This will be a challenge, especially if local government budgets continue to be pressured, as they have been in recent years. Therefore, the

council will need to regularly review what steps it can take to accelerate the impact of the plan and meet key milestones more quickly.

72. High Needs block income is shown at the provisional settlement level for 2025/26 and is assumed to increase by 3% per annum from 2026/27, in line with DfE guidance. Any change to the level of the high needs block will impact on the plan, either positively or negatively.
73. The council's Safety Valve agreement includes a proposed transfer of 1% from schools block to the high needs block each year from 2025/26 to 2028/29. Whilst this is included in the agreement, the council is required to consult annually with schools on the level of any transfer and seek Secretary of State approval each year if that value is greater than 0.5%. The value of the proposed 1% transfer for 2025/26 was assumed to be £3.754m.
74. Following consultation with schools, and the provisional announcement of school funding for 2025/26, Schools Forum did not support a transfer of 1% for 2025/26 when the proposal was discussed in December. The recommendation from Schools Forum was taken to the High Needs Sustainability Board on 19th December and it was agreed that Cabinet would need to ratify the views of schools that the transfer should be the maximum level that would not impact on school budgets. In the revised plan submitted to the DfE the level of the block transfer is assumed to be 0.5% of schools block, or £1.937m.
75. The final DSG settlement has now been received. The settlement includes a 7.9% increase in the high needs block for Wiltshire and confirms a 0.5% increase in core factors for mainstream schools. Analysis of the data indicates that the maximum affordable block transfer, without impacting on National Funding Formula rates for schools will be £0.915m, or 0.24%. This is £1.022m lower than the revised plan.
76. In future years of the plan, high needs block increases are assumed at 3% per annum, in line with government guidance, and the assumption of a 1% block transfer each year continues. This would be consulted on annually and reviewed in the context of the funding settlement each year however the experience from this year puts the affordability of a 1% transfer in future years at risk.

Legal Implications

77. The schools block is the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that is allocated to fund the National Funding Formula (NFF) for pupils aged 5 to 16, in mainstream schools. The high needs block is the amount of DSG that is allocated to support pupils aged 0 to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
78. Whilst the schools block is ring-fenced in line with the DSG conditions of grant, local authorities can transfer up to and including 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, with the approval of their Schools Forum. Where a local authority wishes to transfer more than 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, and/or where agreement has not been reached with Schools Forum, the local authority must seek the agreement of the Secretary of State.
79. The Safety Valve agreement does not specify the level of the schools block transfer, it sets financial targets for the end of each financial year, therefore this proposal is not in breach of the agreement.

80. The consultation process was undertaken in a compliant way, and the process followed was in accordance with the legislation on this matter.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

81. The revised plan has been developed quickly and less engagement has been undertaken than officers would have liked. These proposals are going to Children's Select Committee on the 15 January 2024 and comments from the committee will be included in the delivery plans going forward.

82. These decisions have been discussed at Schools Forum, who have been kept appraised throughout the process.

Conclusions

83. Endorsing the revised plan that was submitted to the DfE provides a credible plan to remove the council's biggest financial risk.

84. While a seven-year recovery programme does leave the council with a bigger residual deficit to manage, this approach balances the financial urgency with maintaining the quality of support that the council provides to children and young people with SEND.

85. Taking a decision to transfer less money into the high needs block may seem counterintuitive at a time when the system is running a deficit against that budget, however, the risk that a 1% transfer poses to the delivery of the rest of the financial sustainability plan is significant.

86. Schools are the partners in this process who have the biggest impact on the success or failure of the wider SEND Sustainability plan.

87. The additional high needs block funding in the government's budget exceeds the monetary difference between a 1% transfer and a 0.24% transfer. However, this had already been taken into account in the forecast and so it would leave the plan £1.022m less than the figures submitted in December.

88. Given the factors above, the proposal is to support the decision from School's Forum and write to the Secretary of State to amend the block transfer request to reflect the highest percentage transfer possible without impacting school budgets.

Lucy Townsend - Chief Executive

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – November 2024 Safety Valve Monitoring Update

Appendix 2 – Changes to the SEND sustainability plan

Appendix 3 – School's Block Transfer Consultation Report

Background Papers

[Schools Forum papers, December 2024](#)

[Minutes of Wiltshire Council Cabinet, March 2024](#)