



North  
Northamptonshire  
Council

**North Northamptonshire Schools Forum: 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023**

**Agenda Item 18**

**High Needs Update 2023-24 & Proposed High Needs Place Changes for 2024-25**

## **Key Message**

The Forum is asked to:

- note the SEND delivery programme update.
- note High Need Block forecast deficit for 2023-24
- note the High Needs Places proposed to be commissioned for 2024-25
- note the legislative requirements that encompass a DSG High Needs Block Deficit

### **1. SEND delivery programme update**

- 1.1 The financial monitoring of the High Needs Block has improved through systems created by the High Needs Funding Manager. There is a vastly improved audit trail of approved spend which is tightly monitored. Funding decisions are made by Decision Making Groups and are recorded with clear dates of reviewing. There are some areas of monitoring that require further improvements however, such as interim transport agreements.
- 1.2 The local authority continues to invest in earlier preventative support in the form of outreach support to mainstream schools. At a primary level there is a comprehensive offer of support coming from the LA's SEND Support Service, Maplefields outreach and Rowan Gate outreach. The services are well coordinated. At a secondary level SEND Support Services and Maplefields Outreach are currently in place and the local authority is considering options for enhancing this offer.
- 1.3 There is continued improvement of engagement with the sector including half termly SENCO meetings, SENCO conferences, Meet the Team parent events. There has been recent training from the EHC team on the phased transfer process and annual reviews and these have been well attended by the sector.
- 1.4 The local authority is moving away from special arrangements for funding in mainstream schools and are instead using a banding system for all top up funding. Training on the banding was delivered to SENCOs in September. It is felt that the banding system allows for more transparency to mainstream top up funding. A banding system remains in place for all Early Help Locality Funding requests.

- 1.5 There continues to be a challenge in keeping up with the demand to provide Educational Psychology advice for statutory assessments in a timely way. The Educational Psychology Service have need to scale back all traded work with schools to urgent work only. The LA has been trialling the use of commissioned Educational Psychologists to support with statutory assessments, but early indications are that this will not be a long-term solution.
- 1.6 Permanent recruitment within the Education, Health and Care team is underway. This will provide the service with much needed stability and enable them to continue to develop and improve services. Requests for statutory assessment this quarter remain high with 213 new requests being made totalling 186 new EHCP's.
- 1.7 The Sensory Impairment Service continue to provide a service to West Northants Council. The proposal to move to a traded model from the West Northants School's Forum has not yet progressed.
- 1.8 September has seen the opening of 4 new units: Mawsley Community Primary School, Thrapston Primary School, Wollaston School and Croyland Nursery School and Day Nursery. This has increased the capacity of unit places by 48. The number of places with the current special schools has increased from 1196 in September 2022 to 1265 in September 2023.

## 2. HNB projected spending 2023-24

### Current overall position statement for projected spend for the HNB 2023-24

	Original Budget 23-24	Revised Budget July 23-24	Forecasted Spend	Variance
SENDIF Plus	250,000	250,000	750,000	500,000
NNC Special School Place Funding	12,170,833	12,170,833	12,387,500	216,667
NNC Special School Top Ups	12,911,625	12,911,625	14,961,961	2,050,336
NNC Special School Special Arrangments	965,907	965,907	122,313	(843,594)
NNC Special School Top Up Protection	193,567	193,567	193,567	0
NNC Special School TPG&TPECG	852,804	852,804	854,190	1,386
NNC Special School 3.4% Additional Grant	805,897	805,897	805,897	0
NNC SEN Units Occupied Place Funding	1,695,333	1,695,333	1,461,000	(234,333)
NNC SEN Units Top Ups	1,098,500	1,098,500	1,493,539	395,039
AP Free Schools Place Funding	190,000	190,000	190,000	0
AP Free Schools TPG&TPECG	12,539	12,539	0	(12,539)
Post 16 Top Ups in FE Colleges	1,953,207	1,953,207	1,700,000	(253,207)
Hospital Education Services	100,000	100,000	0	(100,000)
Non Maintained & Independent SEN Unit Top Up	190,430	190,430	103,635	(86,795)
Out of County Special Topups	1,620,986	1,620,986	1,530,960	(90,026)
Non Maintained & Independent Special Top Up	8,914,853	8,914,853	12,127,000	3,212,147
Non Maintained & Independent Mainstream Top Up	440,707	440,707	332,173	(108,534)
Out of County Mainstream Top Ups	313,062	313,062	515,749	202,687
Mainstream Top Ups	7,537,801	7,537,801	8,000,000	462,199
Alternative Provision	2,650,000	2,650,000	2,650,000	0
Educational Entitlement Team	543,416	543,416	543,416	0
Specialist Support Service	649,979	649,979	649,979	0
Northamptonshire Parent Partnership Service	30,000	30,000	30,000	0
Sensory Impairment Provision	970,685	970,685	970,685	0
Direct payments	190,000	190,000	356,555	166,555
Therapies	40,000	40,000	65,000	25,000
Support For Inclusion	105,000	105,000	105,000	0
Outreach Services	454,000	454,000	720,441	266,441
Import Export adjustment		(102,000)	0	102,000
Additional Funding for special free schools		176,000	0	(176,000)
	<b>57,851,131</b>	<b>57,925,131</b>	<b>63,620,560</b>	<b>5,695,429</b>

### **3. High Needs Places 2024-25**

- 3.1 The identified need for specialist High Needs places in North Northamptonshire continues to increase. This is causing ongoing pressure on the availability of appropriate placements. As a result, the number of higher cost independent and non-maintained school places being commissioned is also increasing.
- 3.2 A SEND sufficiency strategy was completed in the 2022-23 financial year which showed the need to create additional local capacity to meet need and reduce costs. In response, NNC has increased the number of Special School and SEND unit places commissioned year on year. A bid for a Free Special School was submitted, but was unsuccessful, and feedback is awaited on a further bid for a new AP provision.
- 3.3 For the 2024-25 academic year, further increases in local places are proposed as set out below:

**North Northants Council School's Forum November 2023**  
**Proposed 2024/25 High Needs Place Changes**

<b>Special Schools</b>	<b>Sept 22</b>	<b>Sept 23</b>	<b>Sep-24</b>
Chelveston Road	57	91	125
Friars Academy	148	154	154
Isebrook SEN Cognition & Learning College	248	254	254
Kingsley School	162	156	156
Maplefields Academy	117	114	114
Red Kite Academy	143	144	144
Rowan Gate Primary School	233	264	264
Wren Spinney Community School	88	88	88
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,196</b>	<b>1,265</b>	<b>1,299</b>

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<b>Resourced Provision/Units</b>	<b>Sept 22</b>	<b>Sept 23</b>	<b>Sep-24</b>
Beanfield Primary Academy	58	55	55
Corby Business Academy	77	77	100
Croyland Primary School	8	8	8
Denfield Park Primary School	14	14	14
Kingswood Secondary Academy	14	14	14
Mawsley Community Primary School	0	9	18
Park Junior School, Wellingborough	10	7	7
Studfall Infant	18	18	18
Studfall Junior Academy	23	24	24
Thrapston Primary School	0	12	24
Wollaston School	0	8	12
Woodnewton - a Learning Community	10	8	8
Croyland Nursery School and Day Nursery	0	10	12
Greenfield Primary School	0	0	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>344</b>

- 3.4 Forum are asked to note and comment on these proposals as part of the definition of the use of HNB funding in 2024-25.
- 3.5 Work is ongoing to identify opportunities to create further capacity with a particular focus on SEMH secondary special school provision.
- 3.6 In the coming year the SEND Sufficiency Strategy will be updated and presented to Frum. This will form the basis of a further action plan with the aim of balancing need with provision.

#### **4. Key areas of work for the coming period**

- To further embed the SEND whole school support and provision set out in the SEND delivery programme.
- To complete a spending review
- To update SEND Sufficiency Strategy

#### **5. Future options**

- 5.1 The DfE's DSG Management Plan must be completed as an urgent priority.
- 5.2 Enter into discussions with the DfE to address this deficit. The DfE is running 3 programmes offering direct support in respect of the effectiveness and sustainability of local authorities' high needs systems, which together will work with all local authorities. They are:
- the Safety Valve Intervention programme,
  - the Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV) programme and
  - ESFA support programme.

The aim of all 3 programmes is to secure sustainable management of local authorities' high needs systems.

- 5.3 Keeping Schools Forum updated regularly about the local authority's DSG account and plans for managing it, including high needs pressures and potential savings.

#### **6. Recommendations for Schools Forum**

- 6.1 The Forum is asked to:
- note the SEND delivery programme update.
  - note High Need Block forecast deficit for 2023-24
  - note the High Needs Places proposed to be commissioned for 2024-25
  - note the legislative requirements that encompass a DSG High Needs Block Deficit

- 6.2 NNC's Corporate Leadership Team will need to urgently meet to discuss the strategy of addressing the deficit of NNC's High Needs Block.
- 6.3 Schools Forum is asked to consider ways of addressing the deficit.
- 6.4 Advice will need to be sought from the DfE as to potential ways of addressing the growing High Needs Block deficit.

## **7. Next steps**

- 7.1 The next steps depend on strategy proposals by North Northamptonshire Corporate Leadership Team, the feedback given by Schools Forum voting members at this meeting and advice from the DfE.

## **8. Financial implications**

- 8.1 North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) High Needs Block has taken NNC's DSG into a DSG Deficit position. There are legislative regulations that govern the operations of DSG once a DSG deficit is identified.
- 8.2 The DfE has made changes to the regulations, now incorporated into the [School and Early Years Finance \(England\) Regulations 2023](#) in regulation 8, regulation 39 and schedule 2, to give statutory backing to a new process for handling DSG deficits. The options available to NNC are:
- carry all the deficit forward to set against the schools budget in the next financial year; or
  - carry part of the deficit forward to set against the schools budget in the next financial year and carry the rest of it forward to the following financial year; or
  - not set any of the deficit against the schools budget in the next financial year, but carry all the deficit forward to the following financial year.

## **9. Legal implications**

- 9.1 Operation of High Needs Block DSG must comply with the legislative guidance as set out in [School and Early Years Finance \(England\) Regulations 2023](#) in regulation 8, regulation 39 and schedule 2, to give statutory backing to a new process for handling DSG deficits.
- 9.2 The [DSG conditions of grant](#) also sets out that any local authority with an overall deficit on its DSG account at the end of the financial year, or whose DSG surplus has substantially reduced during the year, must be able to present a plan to the department and cooperate in handling that situation by:
- providing information, as and when requested by the DfE about its plans for managing its DSG account in the 2023-24 financial year and subsequently.

- providing information, as and when requested by the DFE about pressures and potential savings on its high needs budget.
- meeting with DFE's officials, as and when they request to discuss the local authority's plans and financial situation.
- keeping Schools Forum updated regularly about the local authority's DSG account and plans for managing it, including high needs pressures and potential savings.

## **10. Risks**

10.1 NNC's High Needs Block must operate within the parameters set out in:

- [School and Early Years Finance \(England\) Regulations 2023](#) in regulation 8, regulation 39 and schedule 2, which gives statutory backing to a new process for handling DSG deficits and
- [DSG conditions of grant](#).

If this is not complied with, there is a risk that decisions made will be ultra vires.

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