

## Notice of Meeting

### Schools Forum

Stuart Matthews (Academy School Representative) (Chair)  
Elizabeth Savage, Academy School Representative (Vice-Chair)  
Jenny Baker, Special School Representative  
Sue Butler, Early Years PVI Provider  
Stuart Bevan, Academy Representative  
Caroline Johnson, Primary School Representative  
Juanita Dunlop, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Keith Grainger, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Tim Griffith, Academy School Representative  
Grant Strudley, Academy School Representative  
Gareth Croxon, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)  
Katie Moore, Academy School Representative  
Paul Tatum, Trades Union Representative



### Also Invited:

Councillor Roy Bailey, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning

**Wednesday 13 December 2023, 4.30 pm**  
**Zoom Meeting**

### Agenda

*All councillors at this meeting have adopted the Mayor's Charter which fosters constructive and respectful debate.*

Item	Description	Page
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members</b>	
	To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members. <b>Reporting: ALL</b>	
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.  Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.  Any Member with an affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting. <b>Reporting: ALL</b>	

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3.	<b>Minutes and Matters Arising</b> <b>Reporting:</b> ALL	3 - 8
4.	<b>Safety Valve Update</b>	9 - 36
	To update the Schools Forum on the initial Safety Valve proposal to be submitted by Bracknell Forest Council to the Department for Education by 15 December 2023 and to report responses from schools to a consultation on the council's proposal to secure a transfer of the equivalent of 1% of the schools block funding into the High Needs Block, while capping the impact on any individual school budget to a maximum of 0.5%. <b>Reporting:</b> Paul Clark, Finance Business Partner	
5.	<b>Dates of Future Meetings</b>	
	The next meeting of the Forum will be held at 4.30pm on Thursday 11 January <b>Reporting:</b> Jamie Beardsmore	

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media is permitted. Please contact Jamie Beardsmore, 01344 352044, [jamie.beardsmore@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.beardsmore@bracknell-forest.gov.uk), so that any special arrangements can be made.

Published: 5 December 2023

#### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS**

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**SCHOOLS FORUM  
16 NOVEMBER 2023  
4.32 - 5.32 PM**

**Present:**

Stuart Matthews, Academy School Representative (Chair)

Sue Butler, Early Years PVI Provider  
Stuart Bevan, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Caroline Johnson, Primary School Representative  
Juanita Dunlop, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Keith Grainger, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Tim Griffith, Academy School Representative  
Grant Strudley, Academy School Representative  
Gareth Croxon, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)  
Katie Moore, Academy School Representative  
Paul Tatum, Trades Union Representative

**Observer:**

Councillor Roy Bailey, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning (Observer)

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Elizabeth Savage, Academy School Representative

**10. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Forum on 14 September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

Arising from the minutes, the following points were noted:

- An update on College Hall would be covered in Agenda item 4.
- Grainne and Cllr Bailey's had drafted a letter for the Government outlining the Forum's over funding for the High Needs budget. The letter needed to be reviewed before it was sent.
- The graphs requested by the Forum to illustrate the scenarios of 95% funding, and for if the 9% increase in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had been granted instead of 3%, would be covered in item 6 off the agenda.

**11. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**12. College Hall Update**

Zoe Livingstone and Chris Kiernan provide an update to Schools Forum on developments at College Hall, following the last report submitted on the 22 June.

Following the inspection in July 2023, College Hall had been judged to be inadequate. As a result, the local authority in partnership with the school has produced a statement of action in order to directly address the key areas of development that had been identified in the report. Those areas included:

- Ensuring Safeguarding is effective – Although there had been some improvements on Safeguarding prior to the inspection, outstanding matters remained.
- A clear plan for the school vision and admission arrangements.
- Improving the assessment and teaching of reading.
- Improving the curriculum.
- Developing a more cohesive enrichment programme.
- Improving attendance.

The Ofsted report had noted that the management committee had already started making effective decisions for the school, therefore it was felt they still had the capacity to carry out the necessary improvements. Unexpectedly the interim headteacher had resigned from College Hall in July. A new full-time interim headteacher was found and has been in post since the summer holidays. Since the inspection in July certain improvements had already been secured at College Hall including:

- An external consultant had been appointed for 3 days a week, to support with the development of teaching, the curriculum and assessment.
- All senior leaders have now been assigned clearly defined roles.
- A revised admission policy.
- Changes to the school timetable to maximise learning.
- Changes to the curriculum to include a greater offer of practical subjects.
- There is a new multi-sensory space at College Hall.
- A new behaviour policy which has seen reductions in suspensions, improvements to attendance.
- Significant improvements to the systems monitoring attendance.
- Significant improvements to the physical environment at College Hall.

As a school of concern, College Hall has been subject to an academisation order due to DfE statutory guidelines. The selection of an appropriate sponsor is delegated to a regional director. However, the regional director officials have been working closely with the local authority and the management committee.

In response to questions the following point was noted:

- The clarity and stability of the new headteacher being in post had created a better working environment which seemed to be having a positive effect on staff's wellbeing.

### 13. **The Schools Budget Monitoring 2023-24**

Paul Clark provided the forum with update on the 2023-24 forecast budget monitoring position for the Schools Budget. The budget had been updated to reflect updates in the levels (DSG) funding as well as new grants that had been allocated in relation to the early years supplementary grant and the teachers additional pay grant. In the original forecasts an overspend of £7.116M had been projected on the Higher Needs

Block (HNB). An updated forecast however was now putting the overspend at £8.54M for the HNB. This was caused by 3 factors:

- The rate of increase in Education Healthcare plans (EHCP) was approximately 20% higher than expected causing a further £0.5M overspend.
- Price increases had been significantly above what was expected, leading to a further £0.6M overspend.
- There is a forecast overspend of approximately £0.2M at College Hall.

Taking account of these updates, a £24.131m cumulative deficit was being forecast on the DSG funded Schools Budget for 31 March 2024.

A small underspend of £0.1M was being forecast on capital investment, largely due to underspendings on a small number of school specific projects.

In response to questions the following points were noted:

- There is limited work that can be done in the short term to reduce the increasing financial burden, but in the medium term there is more of an opportunity to reduce costs such as; negotiating with providers on prices and costs and increasing capacity to keep more children in Bracknell Forest schools.
- There was a feeling amongst Forum members that the difficult financial position was not due to the fault of Bracknell Forest or Bracknell Forest schools, but due to factors largely outside their hands.
- The Forum were informed Cllr Temperton, Leader of Bracknell Forest Council had written to James Sunderland MP, to explain the issues Bracknell Forest had experienced with the DfE, around the funding formula and to lobby for additional funds

**RESOLVED** That the Schools Forum NOTES:

- the budget variances being forecast on the Schools Budget that total to an aggregate net forecast over spending before Emerging Issues of £8.117m (paragraph 6.14);
- that including Emerging Issues, the forecast over-spending increases to £8.654m (paragraph 6.14);
- that the year-end balance held in the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account is forecast at a deficit of £24.131m deficit and that the cost to Bracknell Forest Council of servicing this level of “debt” in 2024/25 will be around £1.2m per year (paragraph 6.15);
- the expectation that the liability to fund balances held in the Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account will transfer to LAs from April 2026 (paragraphs 6.20 to 6.21)
- progress to date on the Education Capital Programme, as summarised at Annex 2.

The Forum did however note the update with concern as it was felt the insufficient funding provided by the government would have consequences in schools which would ultimately fall back on students.

14. **Update on 2024-25 School Budgets including outcomes from the October 2023 Financial Consultation with Schools**

Paul Clark provided an update to the Schools Forum on 2024-25 funding matters.

In October an update was given from the DfE on the 2024/25 financial settlement. In general, the DfE was offering reduced levels of funding available for school in comparison to what it had originally announced in July 2023. For the 2024/25 financial year there was to be on average an 0.8% reduction in funding per pupil in England in comparison to their original announcement. Furthermore, there was to be £93.318 million made available for the Bracknell Forest Schools Block DSG, £0.9M less than the originally announced £94.218M.

At the previous meeting of the Schools Forum there had been a request for modelling on what the DSG income in the HNB for Bracknell Forest be if it was factored on a 9% increase, which is what Bracknell Forest has received for a number of years. On reviewing the data, an alternative approach was presented which showed what the increase would have been if from 2018/19 Bracknell Forest's HNB DSG had increased at the same rate in which the number of pupils with an EHCP had increased. If it had done so, the grant would be £29.85M in 2022/23 instead of the just over £20M which was received.

The outcomes from the annual financial consultation with schools were also presented although no decisions were sought at this time as further budget proposals are likely to follow from the Safety Valve, all of which should be considered at the same time. Responses had been received from over half of schools. There were 6 main questions asked in this consultation all of which received support from a large majority of responders. The question were:

1. Should minimum increases in per pupil funding be set at the maximum permitted amount of +0.5%?
2. Should the cost of financing any impact from 1. be met from deductions to schools receiving the highest % increase?
3. Should de-delegation continue on permitted services?
4. Should maintained schools continue to contribute £20 per pupil to LA statutory education related costs?
5. Is the best way to calculate notional SEN through the actual number of pupils on SEN support or in receipt of an EHCP
6. Should individual school Notional SEN Funding amounts be calculated from the key proxy SEN funding factors in the NFF plus an element of core per pupil funding amounts?

In discussion the following points were noted by the forum:

- The Forum had huge concern over section 2.4 off the report, where the funding settlement had fallen from 2.7% to 1.7%, before any potential implications of the Safety Valve had been factored in. It was felt the only way the schools could manage this update to the funding formula would be real term cuts, due to staffing pay awards and inflation. The forum had extreme concern on the impact these cuts would have for children in the Borough.
- There was concern that this budget if implemented could cause a number of Strategic Risk Management Issues, due to the effect real term cuts would have on schools.
- Cllr Bailey confirmed their had yet to be a response from James Sunderland MP about the concerns over funding of Schools in Bracknell Forest.
- There was concern over the effects on smaller schools, and it was felt the impact on smaller schools should be considered in the budget.
- The need to raise awareness with parents about the Local authority's financial situation and its ability to support schools financially particularly SEN.

The forum noted the 2023/24 forecast budget monitoring position for the Schools Budget, however wanted to place on record their objection in the strongest terms to what would be a real-term cut and that those cuts would pose significant risks to the children in the Borough.

#### 15. **Safety Valve Update**

Grainne Siggins and Duane Chappell gave an update on the Safety Valve Program. Bracknell Forest Council had sought to engage with as much openness and transparency as possible, seeking to engage with the concerns of head teachers within the borough wherever possible. The final submission deadline for the Safety Valve was to be the 12<sup>th</sup> January, but a credible plan needed to be put together by the 15<sup>th</sup> December.

Since the previous meeting 2 workshops had taken place with headteachers, in which the local authority sought to offer transparency on the spending on the HNB. Headteachers were asked to give feedback on their key priorities, as well as areas that they felt needed improvement or a different model of delivery. Furthermore, the same work had been done with the Parent/Carer forum who offered feedback on their key priorities. Another workshop was due to take place focusing on services that had been identified as not offering best value for money. Headteachers were asked to continue their engagement in this work so that the Bracknell Forest Schools budget could best be brought into a balanced position.

In workshops that had taken places so far, 4 areas had been identified as areas to look at:

- Early Intervention and demand management.
- Right Provision, Right Time
- Value for Money Services
- Effective Pathways and Transition to Independence

Work was being done to try and best manage provision so that local pupils would be able to go to local schools in their community and a headteacher had been seconded for 1 day a week to work on this.

The local authority recognised the wellbeing of teacher's had been highlighted as a significant issue and promised to work with schools as closely as possible and that the authority would be as creative as possible if a top slice did have to be implemented.

In response to questioning the following points were noted:

- It was confirmed that whilst the early years sector operated with a different block of funding, there would be engagement on any plans that could affect that sector. Several schools with nurseries had already been invited to previous workshops.

#### 16. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The next meeting of the Schools Forum would take place on 13 December.

**CHAIRMAN**



**TO: Schools Forum**  
**DATE: 13 December 2023**

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## **Safety Valve Update** **Executive Director: Resources / Executive Director: People**

### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Schools Forum on the initial Safety Valve proposal to be submitted by Bracknell Forest Council to the Department for Education by 15 December 2023 and to report responses from schools to a consultation on the council's proposal to secure a transfer of the equivalent of 1% of the schools block funding into the High Needs Block, while capping the impact on any individual school budget to a maximum of 0.5%.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Schools Forum notes and comments on the update provided in the report.
- 2.2 That the Schools Forum confirms their support for the proposed interventions outlined in paragraphs 5.6 and 5.6.
- 2.3 That the Schools Forum notes the outcome of the block transfer (top slice) consultation and takes a formal decision on whether to support the proposal.

### **3 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is appropriate for the Schools Forum to be aware of and offer comment on this significant matter affecting Bracknell Forest Council and maintained and academy schools within the Borough.
- 3.2 An application for the block transfer proposal recommended by the council will need to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Education (SoS) for consideration. It is understood that the SoS is not bound to follow the view of the Schools Forum in her determination but will give significant weight to it.

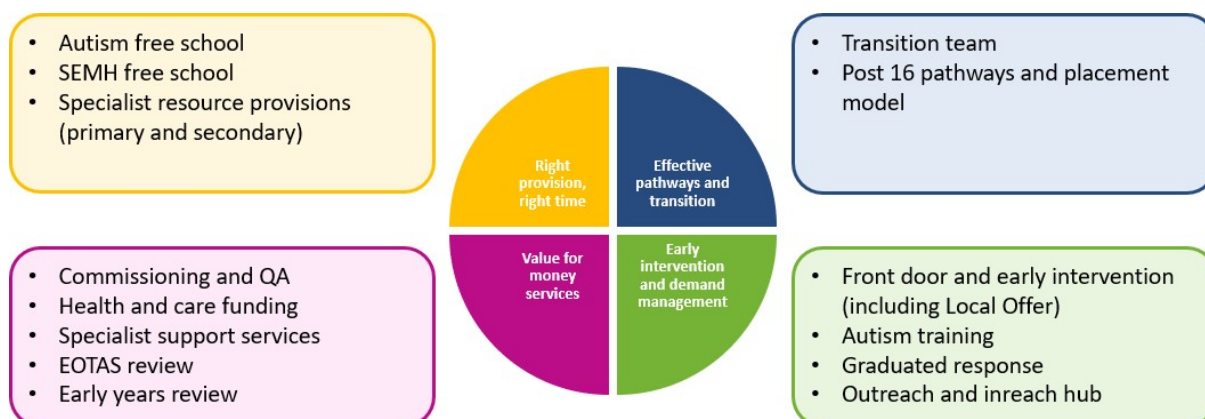
### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 The Council could have declined the invitation to participate in the Safety Valve programme but has not done so as this would mean that the annual and cumulative deficit on the DSG budget would remain a local responsibility. The Safety Valve programme offers financial and other support to help address and fund the deficit.
- 4.2 The alternative option of not recommending a block transfer was considered and rejected by the council on the grounds that the Safety Valve programme expects all parts of the local education, health and care system to play a part in addressing the deficit collectively and it would not be possible to achieve a balanced position on the DSG as required by the DfE without this.

### **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The Council is committed to working with local area partners to develop a sustainable and effective high needs system that will ensure good outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

- 5.2 Learning from other areas that have participated in the Safety Valve programme has demonstrated that robust leadership and a strong collaboration across education and finance can significantly improve the sustainability of local systems.
- 5.3 The Council has given careful consideration to research-based guidance on the features of effective high needs systems. The proposed programme builds on the improvement work already being delivered in Bracknell Forest through the Written Statement of Action and the new SEND strategy but looks to significantly accelerate the pace of further improvements.
- 5.4 In developing our Safety Valve programme, the Council held a series of workshops and engagement sessions with headteachers and chairs of governors, as well as a workshop with the Bracknell Forest Parent Carer Forum. Through these workshops, headteachers were invited to offer views on the effectiveness of current spending across a wide range of service funded from the DSG. The findings of these early discussions were presented at the last Schools Forum meeting in November.
- 5.5 Further workshop sessions with headteachers have taken place in recent weeks to co-produce the approach to improvements to both specialist provision and specialist support. The output from these workshops has informed the proposed Safety Valve programme activities. The areas of focus identified will ensure that overall SEND system best meets the needs of pupils and schools and identify areas where current expenditure is not felt to demonstrate value for money. This has led to a programme of activity as summarised in the pictorial below.



- 5.6 Indicative impacts from implementing the interventions outlined in the pictorial above are set out below up to 2029/30, which is the latest realistic date the Council may be able to work towards through the Safety Valve programme.

	<b>Potential Financial Impact (to 2029/30)</b>	<b>Assumed start date</b>
New specialist resource provision (x 2)	-£2.8m	2024/25
Re-provision of College Hall Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) with alternative commissioned services for pupils	-£1.4m	2024/25
Other changes to Education Otherwise than at School Provision (EOTAS) provision	-£0.4m	2024/25
Phased introduction of new banding tool	-£0.4m	2024/25
Changes to Specialist Support Services	-£0.1m	2024/25
Additional Health and Care funding	-£0.1m	2025/26

New SEMH free school	-£0.9m	2025/26
New Autism free school	-£1.4m	2026/27
<b>Sum of mitigations (excluding Block Transfer / Top Slice)</b>	<b>-£7.5m</b>	

- 5.7 Participation in the programme can secure access to additional capital funding for new local provision and a material financial contribution from the DfE towards the accumulated Dedicated School Grant (DSG) deficit, should proposals for reform submitted by the Council and its partners including schools be accepted.
- 5.8 A significant financial commitment is also required from the Council, both to secure delivery of the proposed programme of activity and to write off the remainder of the accumulated deficit not funded by the DfE. At the time of this report's publication, discussions are continuing between Council officers and the DfE's Safety Valve team on these details.
- 5.9 At the time of this report's publication, Council officers have identified a potential route to reaching a balanced in-year DSG position by 2029/30 through implementation of a broad range of activities outlined in this report, including making a 1% block transfer to the High Needs Block. As part of this, the maximum contribution sought from any individual school is 0.5% of its 2024/25 funding. The consultation document is set out in Annex A.
- 5.10 The block transfer consultation for headteachers and chairs of governors closes on Friday 8 December, and therefore the results are not available at the time of this report's publication. The results of the consultation will be set out for the Schools Forum's consideration in a supplementary Annex C in advance of the meeting.
- 5.11 Agreement from the Schools Forum to a block transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block is considered by the DfE to represent a commitment from school leaders to the plan. Once the results of the consultation have been shared, the Schools Forum will be asked to make a formal decision on whether it supports the council's proposal for a 1% block transfer, which caps impact on any individual school budgets to a maximum of 0.5%.
- 5.12 Looking ahead, the Council is required to submit an initial proposal to the DfE by 15 December 2023 that sets out proposals to bring expenditure in line with grant levels over a period of around 5 years and a final proposal that addresses any feedback from the DfE by 12 January 2024. This timetable has been set by the DfE and is very tight. The proposal submitted will need to highlight any requests requiring the approval of the Secretary of State, including the 1% block transfer that is beyond flexibilities available to local authorities.

## **6 Advice Received from Statutory and other Officers**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty upon the Council to secure sufficient schools to provide primary and secondary education in its area and it should have particular regard to securing special education provision. Following the enactment of The Children and Families Act 2014, the Council retains responsibility for commissioning services for children and young people with SEN or a disability. It is required to keep the provision for children and young people with SEN or disabilities under review, including its sufficiency (Section 315 of the Education Act 1996), and to promote wellbeing and improve quality, working in conjunction with parents, young people and providers. This Act and its associated guidance is clear that, when considering any re-organisation of provision, it must be clear how it is satisfied that the proposed alternative arrangements will lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for children with SEN or a disability. A final agreement for funding will be entered into in due course with the DfE. The Council's legal team will advise on the terms prior to its execution.

### Executive Director of Resources

- 6.2 The Safety Valve programme represents a significant financial challenge for the local authority, requiring the current expected in-year overspend of just under £9m to be mitigated over a period of around 5 years. This will require significant financial contributions from the council both to fund the programme of activities identified and to part fund the deficit that will have accumulated up to this point. While the DfE is expected to make available supporting revenue and capital grant funding, the majority of these costs will need to be borne by the council. If approved, the block transfer proposal will enable an additional £0.96m of funding to be made available to support education services for SEND children.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 An equalities impact screening for the proposed Block Transfer (top slice) that is subject to consultation with schools has been completed and is attached at Annex B.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The level of the deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant due to rising costs in recent years of SEND services represents the most serious financial threat the Council faces. Participation in the Safety Valve programme provides the impetus to address this through the identification of mitigations that both reduce costs and maintain a focus on educational outcomes, while offering the opportunity to secure both revenue and capital grant funding from the DfE that is not available to authorities outside Safety Valve.

### Climate Change Impact

- 6.5 Not applicable at this stage, however increased local school provision will help reduce CO2 emissions associated with transporting pupils to schools outside the Borough's boundary.

### Health Impact

- 6.6 The Council's recently approved SEND strategy includes a focus on providing additional school places within Bracknell Forest, that would significantly reduce travelling time for children who require specialist places whose needs cannot currently be met within the Borough. In most instances this will have a positive impact on the health and well-being of those pupils.

## **7 Consultation**

- 7.1 Details of engagement and consultation with key stakeholders regarding Safety Valve is included in the report.

### Background Papers

Annex A – Block Transfer Condonation Document November 2023

Annex B – Block transfer initial equalities screening

### Contact for further information

Paul Clark, Finance Business Partner – People Directorate (01344 354054)

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# **RESPONDING TO THE INCREASED COST OF SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH HIGH NEEDS**

## **A CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOLS**

**Issued on: 28 November 2023**

**For reply by: 8 December 2023**

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Annex A - Indicative school contributions to block transfer (top slice)

Annex B - Central Schools Service Block Budgets

Annex C - Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) blocks

Annex D - What does the High Needs Block fund?

Annex E – Proposed Funding Transfers to the High Needs Block



## **Why are we undertaking this consultation?**

1. Like many local authorities (LAs) across the country, the council is facing significant challenges in managing costs forecast for supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) whose needs require additional funding from the High Needs Block.
2. As long ago as 2019 the emerging deficits in some LAs accounts were reaching the point that their overall financial stability was being jeopardised. To alleviate this, the Government introduced temporary accounting arrangements to ensure that no liability for school budget deficits fell to an LA's General Fund, enabling local areas to roll forward deficits through a Dedicated Schools Grant Adjustment Account. This arrangement was initially set to expire on 31 March 2023, but recognising the current level of deficits, has been extended to 31 March 2026.
3. Recognising that a permanent solution was required, the Department for Education (DfE) also introduced a targeted Safety Valve intervention programme. This Programme focusses on supporting the areas with the highest proportionate deficit to produce a medium-term plan that:
  - a) Brings SEND budgets to a sustainable, in-year balanced position;
  - b) Identifies funding, normally with a contribution from the DfE, to eliminate the accumulated deficit.
4. The key financial benefit of entering the Safety Valve programme is that substantial additional income, both revenue and capital, is likely to be available from the DfE to supplement the LAs contributions. The DfE also expects LAs to seek income contributions from other partners, including health and schools.
5. The scale of Bracknell Forest's current and rising deficit led to the Council being invited to join the Safety Valve programme in July 2023.
6. Multiple interventions have been identified through the LAs engagement with school leaders to reduce costs of SEND services while remaining focused on educational outcomes, most notably opening additional local provision. All of those, together with the prospect of additional income from the DfE and Health partners, are insufficient to achieve a balanced position within the DfE's expected timescale. In addition, the deficit would continue to increase and reach a total of over £50m (representing 50% of the Council's annual budget) without further options being pursued and in the absence of a Safety Valve deal.
7. This consultation is therefore seeking agreement from schools to transfer a maximum of 0.5% of their individual budgets to support the High Needs block, equating to 0.42% overall. This would supplement a further 0.58% to be released by reducing other centrally managed school budgets and transferring some costs to the LA. Taken together, these proposals will release the equivalent of 1% of the schools block budget to help fund the cost of supporting pupils with SEND.

## **Provisions for requesting a financial contribution from schools**

8. Funding for schools and associated budgets is met from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which is allocated to LAs by the DfE. This grant is received in four notional "Blocks" – Schools, Central School Services, High Needs and Early Years – each of which is allocated through a separate national funding formula (see Annex C for details).
9. Although the DfE does not attach a ring fence to the Blocks, the funding is to be spent only on the areas it has been allocated for.

10. Taking account of the current and forecast budget position, and the requirements of the Safety Valve programme, the Council is proposing a transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, effective from 1 April 2024.
11. The Schools Block covers both funds delegated directly to schools as well as a range of other budgets that are collectively referred to as the Growth Fund that can support schools with in-year changes in pupil numbers.
12. Arrangements for a proposed financial contribution from schools are set as follows:
  - LAs may transfer up to 0.5% of their Schools Block funding into another block, with the approval of the Schools Forum.
  - LAs wishing to transfer should consult with all maintained schools and academies, and the Schools Forum should take into account the views of schools before giving their approval.
  - If the LA wishes to move more than 0.5%, or if the Schools Forum has turned down a proposal to transfer but the LA still wishes to proceed, they must submit a request to the Secretary of State.

### **Future Financial Forecasts**

13. Schools will be aware that the council has been working with the Schools Forum on a medium-term financial forecast for the HNB and has agreed a number of changes designed to ensure appropriate support to pupils whilst at the same time reducing expenditure. As at March 2023, the medium-term plan indicated an in-year deficit for 2023/24 of £7.365m and a cumulative deficit at 31 March 2026, the point that liability for DSG deficits returns to LAs, of £37.9m.
14. An update on the 2023/24 budget performance for the HNB was presented to the Schools Forum in November 2023 which showed an increase in the forecast over spend for the year to £8.654m. The additional spend had arisen because of the increase in number of Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) compared to the rate expected in the budget, and higher fee increases from non-maintained special schools and increased use of the Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS). Based on this increase it is likely that the cumulative deficit will rise to at least £45m. Action is needed urgently to address this situation, which would represent an unsustainable position for both schools spending and the LA.
15. The Council has been advised that reaching an acceptable Safety Valve deal with the DfE will secure a large contribution from the DfE towards the accumulated deficit, potentially in the order of £12m. On this basis, the local share needed to cover the cumulative deficit would reduce but could still be around £33m or higher. This represents a huge financial challenge for any local authority and even more so for Bracknell Forest, being one of the smallest unitary authorities in England. This figure excludes implementation costs associated with making the necessary changes to local provision and systems, that will also need to be funded by the LA to present a credible plan to DfE. Taken together, the Council's contribution would amount to close to £40m, around 40% of its annual budget.
16. Through its participation in the Safety Valve programme the Council has also been invited to bid for additional capital funding to help secure more local provision. Feasibility studies have been commissioned at four sites to inform a funding request that will be submitted to the DfE in January, which underpins delivery of two secondary specialist resource provisions and a new Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) school that are essential to deliver suitable local facilities meet the needs of our children and young people and reduce the reliance on expensive out-of-borough schools.

## **Strategy to Reduce High Needs costs**

17. During November the Council has run a series of workshops for headteachers to review spend across the DSG to identify areas where we could change the model of delivery, reduce or increase provision or cease it.

18. Our Safety Valve programme is being developed based on the priority areas identified by headteachers and parent and carer representatives. The four workstreams are:

- Right provision, right time – focusing on increasing the number of specialist places within the borough.
- Value for money services – focusing on reviewing services to ensure they offer value for money, provide the right support to schools and support positive outcomes for children and young people.
- Early intervention and demand management – focusing on ensuring children and young people’s needs are identified early and they are supported to remain in mainstream education where appropriate.
- Effective pathways and transitions – focusing on developing effective post 16 pathways and placements.

19. Council officers will continue to work with school leaders to further develop the programme. In addition to implementing interventions and specialist places that will support bringing the High Needs Block into balance, our Safety Valve programme will build on the work that is already underway in our Written Statement of Action and new SEND strategy. This work is focused on achieving the best outcomes for children and young people with SEND in the borough.

20. Indicative impacts from pursuing the identified options are set out below up to 2029/30, which is the latest realistic date the Council may be able to work towards through the Safety Valve programme.

	<b>Potential Financial Impact (to 2029/30)</b>	<b>Assumed start date</b>
New specialist resource provision (x 2)	-£2.8m	2024/25
Re-provision of College Hall Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) with alternative commissioned services for pupils	-£1.4m	2024/25
Other changes to Education Otherwise than at School Provision (EOTAS) provision	-£0.4m	2024/25
Phased introduction of new banding tool	-£0.4m	2024/25
Changes to Specialist Support Services	-£0.1m	2024/25
Additional Health and Care funding	-£0.1m	2025/26
New SEMH free school	-£0.9m	2025/26
New Autism free school	-£1.4m	2026/27
<b>Sum of mitigations (excluding Block Transfer / Top Slice)</b>	<b>-£7.5m</b>	

## **Request for a financial contribution from schools: Block Transfer (top slice)**

21. Based on the current year’s projected outturn, annual savings proposals that add up (over time) to a minimum of £8.7m are required to reach a balanced in-year position. To date around £7.5m of cost reductions have been identified as set out in the table above, some of which

cannot be implemented immediately. The Council is therefore proposing this block transfer (top slice) that would create a further c.£1m in offsetting income for SEND services, to take us very close to the minimum we need.

22. In considering the issue of a block transfer (top slice), the Council recognises that school budgets are under pressure and the low 1.7% funding increase proposed for 2024/25 is very unwelcome. We do, however, need to find a balanced approach to funding the current and future deficit, particularly in the next few years before the planned new local schools will be available for placements. Only from this point will it be possible to quickly reduce new spending on the most expensive out of borough establishments.
23. The Council has previously made school representatives aware of the likely proposal for a block transfer (top slice) to help release funding within the DSG for high needs placements.
24. Council officers have given very careful consideration to feedback in developing the proposal. A draft proposal was discussed with members of the Schools Forum SEND subgroup, and some changes were made to the proposals following those discussions. The draft proposal was then shared with wider members of the Schools Forum for comment.
25. This consultation sets out the final proposal for consideration by schools. The work undertaken has been informed by detailed discussions with DfE experts in school funding to ensure clarity regarding which elements of the current budget are mandatory and where there is discretion. It has also considered areas in Bracknell Forest's approach that are more generous to specific circumstances, such as Growth Funding, than adopted in other similar authorities.
26. It is also necessary to recognise that minimum guaranteed changes in per pupil funding – those from 2023/24 to 2024/25 and the minimum cash value schools can be funded at in 2024/25 - mean that not all schools are able to contribute to any proposed top slice. In order to achieve a top slice from school budgets equivalent to 0.5%, other schools would need to contribute up to 0.6% of their budgets. It is recognised that this is higher than the 0.5% that school leaders have indicated they may consider and therefore an alternative approach has been developed that **caps any impact on individual school budgets to a maximum of 0.5%**. The proposed approach amounts to 0.42% of delegated school budgets.
27. Whilst the top slice from any individual school is capped at 0.5%, this proposal seeks to secure £0.962m, the equivalent in value to a transfer of 1% of the Schools Block funding into the High Needs Block. The transfer would be made from both the Schools Block and the Central Schools Block budgets. Annex C provides information on the services covered by all DSG Blocks. To achieve a 1% transfer value, BFC would need to contribute £0.263m to increasing the amount of funding available to the High Needs Block by directly financing some school related costs. This approach is considered necessary to achieve sufficient additional fundings are transferred to the HNB. The different elements of the proposal are summarised below. Annex E sets out more information including changes from 2023/24 budget allocations where relevant.

Budget element	Amount available to support the HNB £000
<b>Schools Block DSG: Growth Fund (estimate)</b>	<b>583.0</b>
Proposed spending:	
1. Post opening costs. Set up funding for new classes agreed to be opened. Time limited to September 2027	-15.0
2. In year increases in pupil numbers. Re-set funding eligibility to only where new classes are agreed with BFC as necessary. Note: funding for Key Stage 1 class sizes would be deleted on this discretionary policy. 87% of LAs do not fund this.	-147.0
	0
<b>Unallocated available balance on Schools Block DSG: Growth Fund</b>	<b>421.0</b>
<b>Transfer from delegated school budgets</b>	<b>401.4</b>
3. Capped at no more than 0.5% per schools (see Annex A for illustrative contribution at school level)	
<b>Potential Funding Transfer from Schools Block to HNB (equivalent to 0.85% of estimated 2024/25 Schools Block DSG)</b>	<b>822.4</b>
4. Contribution from BFC through reduced contribution to statutory Education related duties funded through the Central Schools Services Block. <b>(This frees up the equivalent of 0.15% of the SB)</b>	140.0
<b>Potential Funding Transfer from Schools Block to HNB (equivalent to 1.0% of estimated 2024/25 Schools Block DSG)</b>	<b>962.4</b>

28. The impact of this proposal on individual school budgets is shown in Annex A. The range is from £0 to £14.5k for primaries and from £26.7k to £43.4k for secondaries.
29. The need for a funding transfer from schools will be kept under constant review and withdrawn as soon as possible. Increases to school budgets from 2025/26 are expected to be at the same level of increase as included in the financial settlement from the government.
30. In addition to the £140k cost pressure on the council set out in line 4. of the above table, a further £123.6k pressure falls on the council. This is because the Schools Forum has agreed in previous years that the Schools Block budget would finance this equivalent amount of spending in the Central Schools Services Block, which will no longer be affordable in the Schools Budget going forward.
31. Given its overall financial position and the need for it to earmark further funding for SEND staffing and implementation costs to ensure the full range of proposals to be successfully implemented and embedded, it will not be possible for the Council to simply absorb the impact of the £263.6k loss of income from the above proposal. Options are being evaluated, linked to feedback from schools on the services most and least valued and will be consulted on as part of the Council's draft budget proposals.

### **Who should respond to this consultation?**

32. The Chair of governors of mainstream schools, in consultation with the headteacher and other governors, academy school representatives and other relevant organisations.

## **Queries**

33. If you have any queries on this consultation, please contact:

Paul Clark, Finance Business Partner – People Directorate  
Telephone 01344 354054  
Email: [paul.clark@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:paul.clark@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

## **Responses**

34. Responses are requested by Friday 8 December through the separate response form attached, to:

[education.finance@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:education.finance@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

## **Next steps**

35. The results of this consultation, including all comments made by schools, will be considered by the Schools Forum on 13 December. If the council consider a funding transfer request is necessary, this will be considered by the Schools Forum which will need to take a strategic approach in making its decision.

36. Should the Schools Forum not agree a funding transfer request from the council, an appeal can be made to the Secretary of State. If required, this will need to be submitted no later than 12 January 2024.

## Annex A – Indicative school contributions to block transfer (top slice)

School	October 2023 Provisional NOR, October 2022 other data	0.5% max deduction per school, all NFF factors reduced by 0.5%		
	Forecast budget at 2024-25 NFF rates	0.5% max reduction per school	% change from unscaled	£'s change from unscaled
Ascot Heath Primary School	£1,862,680	£1,862,680	0.00%	£0
Binfield Church of England Primary School	£1,905,870	£1,905,870	0.00%	£0
Birch Hill Primary School	£1,890,826	£1,881,574	-0.49%	£-9,252
College Town Primary School	£2,128,740	£2,128,740	0.00%	£0
Cranbourne Primary School	£961,641	£956,968	-0.49%	£-4,673
Crown Wood Primary School	£2,676,489	£2,671,950	-0.17%	£-4,539
Crowthorne Church of England Primary	£1,013,897	£1,008,937	-0.49%	£-4,959
Fox Hill Primary School	£1,055,505	£1,050,340	-0.49%	£-5,166
Great Hollands Primary School	£1,407,538	£1,400,533	-0.50%	£-7,006
Harmans Water Primary School	£2,065,616	£2,055,672	-0.48%	£-9,944
Holly Spring Primary School	£2,951,937	£2,937,411	-0.49%	£-14,527
Jennett's Park CofE Primary School	£1,844,652	£1,835,503	-0.50%	£-9,149
Meadow Vale Primary School	£2,753,958	£2,740,459	-0.49%	£-13,498
New Scotland Hill Primary School	£1,012,018	£1,007,086	-0.49%	£-4,932
King's Academy Oakwood	£1,067,132	£1,061,832	-0.50%	£-5,300
Owlsmoor Primary School	£2,363,630	£2,363,630	0.00%	£0
The Pines School	£1,548,467	£1,540,884	-0.49%	£-7,584
Sandy Lane Primary School	£1,994,885	£1,984,959	-0.50%	£-9,926
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	£1,028,151	£1,023,039	-0.50%	£-5,112
St Margaret Clitherow Primary School	£996,052	£991,090	-0.50%	£-4,963
St Michael's Easthampstead Primary School	£982,526	£977,630	-0.50%	£-4,896
St Michael's Primary School, Sandhurst	£967,252	£962,437	-0.50%	£-4,815
Uplands Primary School and Nursery	£1,001,621	£996,726	-0.49%	£-4,895
Warfield Church of England Primary School	£2,035,420	£2,035,420	0.00%	£0
Whitegrove Primary School	£1,973,830	£1,973,830	0.00%	£0
Wildmoor Heath School	£1,020,421	£1,015,340	-0.50%	£-5,082
Wildridings Primary School	£1,991,083	£1,981,339	-0.49%	£-9,744
Winkfield St Mary's CofE Primary School	£976,546	£971,751	-0.49%	£-4,794
Wooden Hill Primary and Nursery School	£1,804,118	£1,795,278	-0.49%	£-8,840
The Brakenhale School	£7,022,277	£6,987,326	-0.50%	£-34,951
Easthampstead Park Community School	£6,153,762	£6,123,194	-0.50%	£-30,568
Edgbarrow School	£6,855,502	£6,821,346	-0.50%	£-34,156
Garth Hill College	£9,136,932	£9,093,527	-0.48%	£-43,405
Ranelagh School	£5,359,238	£5,332,554	-0.50%	£-26,684
Sandhurst School	£6,659,703	£6,626,608	-0.50%	£-33,095
King's Academy Binfield - All through	£7,004,732	£6,969,798	-0.50%	£-34,934
<b>Primary Totals</b>	<b>£47,282,504</b>	<b>£47,118,908</b>	<b>-0.35%</b>	<b>£-163,596</b>
<b>Secondary totals</b>	<b>£48,192,144</b>	<b>£47,954,352</b>	<b>-0.49%</b>	<b>£-237,792</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£95,474,648</b>	<b>£95,073,260</b>	<b>-0.42%</b>	<b>£-401,388</b>

Primary - max reduction	£-14,527
Primary - I FE Max reduction	£-5,300
Primary - min reduction	£0
Secondary - max reduction	£-43,405
Secondary - min reduction	£-26,684

## Annex B - Central Schools Service Block Budgets

Budget Area	Schools Budget Funded		
	2023-24 Final Budget	2024-25 Indicative Budget	Cost pressure for BFC
<u>Combined Services Budgets:</u>			
Family Intervention Project	£100,000	£100,000	
Educational Attainment for Looked After Children	£133,590	£133,590	
School Transport for Looked After Children	£42,740	£42,740	
Domestic Abuse	£2,000	£2,000	
SEN Contract Monitoring	£32,680	£32,680	
<i>Central School Services - historic commitments</i>	<b>£311,010</b>	<b>£311,010</b>	
<u>Other Permitted Central Spend</u>			
<u>Miscellaneous (up to 0.1% of Schools Budget):</u>			
Forestcare out of hours support service	£5,150	£5,150	
Borough wide Initiatives	£9,720	£0	
Support to Schools Recruitment & Retention	£5,000	£0	
<u>Statutory and regulatory duties:</u>			
'Retained' elements	£290,680	£27,020	£263,660
<u>Other expenditure:</u>			
School Admissions	£202,025	£202,025	
Schools Forum	£20,935	£20,935	
Boarding Placements for Vulnerable Children	£50,000	£50,000	
Central copyright licensing	£85,560	£85,560	
<i>Central School Services - on-going responsibilities</i>	<b>£669,070</b>	<b>£390,690</b>	
<b>Total Central School Support Services</b>	<b>£980,080</b>	<b>£701,700</b>	
<u>Funding</u>			
Historic commitments	£166,170	£132,930	
On-going responsibilities	£688,670	£708,770	
Total Funding	£854,840	£841,700	
Existing agreed transfer from Schools Budget	£125,240	£0	
Central School Services Total Funding	<b>£980,080</b>	<b>£841,700</b>	
Proposed transfer to the High Needs Block	£0	£140,000	



## **Annex C – Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) blocks**

The DSG is a ring-fenced specific grant and is the main source of income for schools' budgets. It is split into four sections:

1. Early Years Block
2. Schools Block
3. High Needs Block (HNB)
4. Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

### **Early Years Block**

- Free entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds
- Extended entitlement for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds
- Free entitlement for some 2-year-olds

*N.B. (From April 2024 there will be additional funding for 2-year-olds for working parents and from September 2024 from the term after the child turns 9 months there will be additional funding for working families).*

### **Schools Block**

- Main part of mainstream schools' budget
- Calculated on a locally determined formula using several funding factors
- Schools block also contains a Notional SEND amount which is calculated within the locally determined formula. This money supports pupils requiring SEND support
- The SEND funding for schools is based on the following considerations:
  - i. Basic entitlement
  - ii. Prior attainment (how the school has performed over the past years)
  - iii. Social deprivation
  - iv. Lump sum

#### **How are academies funded?**

Academies get the same level of funding for each pupil as a local authority school in the same area, and their SEND notional budget is also worked out in the same way. Academies do get extra funding, but this is not related to SEND, it is for services that academies have to buy for themselves.

### **High Needs Block (HNB)**

Element 3 funding or 'top up' is provided by the Local Authority after a statutory assessment has been carried out and an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has been agreed.

However, not all the high needs funding is given to schools for individual pupils. Some is used for the following:

- State funded special schools
- Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs) and Units
- Places in alternative provision, such as the PRU and Tuition Service
- Central services, for example speech and language service

## **Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)**

The CSSB covers funding allocated to local authorities to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in maintained schools and academies in England.

The CSSB is split into two elements:

- Funding for ongoing responsibilities
- Funding for historical commitments (20% reduction annually by the DfE)

## Annex D – What does the High Needs Block fund?

The Department for Education (DfE) defines high needs (HN) as the support required to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and covers the continuum of provision for relevant pupils and students from 0-25.

The DfE HN funding framework classifies pupils as HN where the individual cost of provision is above £10,000 and provides a separate allocation of income to LAs to meet associated expenses.

The DfE takes a different approach to funding HN pupils between those placed in mainstream schools and those with specialist providers, such as Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units.

For mainstream schools, where in general most pupils do not require more than £10,000 of provision, only costs above £10,000 are treated as HN. These payments are known as element three funding or “top-ups”.

The DfE has determined that the normal Formula Budget for a mainstream school includes a minimum £4,000 to meet core education for every pupil on roll and up to the first £6,000 of additional support needs that some individual pupils may require. Therefore, none of these costs are treated as HN in the funding framework.

As specialist providers only support pupils with costs of provision above £10,000, the whole cost is treated as HN. In these institutions, the first £10,000 is classified as the core per place cost and is intended to be funded from HN income as well as any assessed “top-ups”.

The following table sets out how the DfE funding framework funds pupils with high needs.

Provider type / Service	Funding Source:		
	Element 1 “core funding” of £4,000	Element 2 “additional support” of up to £6,000	Element 3 “top ups” where needs above £10,000
Mainstream school	Schools Block	Schools Block	High Needs Block
SEND Resource Provision Unit attached to a mainstream school	Schools Block	High Needs Block	High Needs Block
Specialist Provider (Special School, AP or PVI institution)	High Needs Block	High Needs Block	High Needs Block
Other provisions e.g., Autistic Support Service, Specialist Therapies etc	High Needs Block	High Needs Block	High Needs Block

Note: The Schools Block funds the BF Funding Formula allocation that is delegated to schools to manage.

HN income funds both the cost of educating BF pupils within BF and also outside of the borough in other local authority schools and placements in private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) sector schools. Since 2014, LAs also have responsibility for funding support to young people with

SEND in further education colleges up to the age of 25 years, an increase from the previous 19 years age limit.

Additionally, high needs funding is also intended to be used where provisions are not arranged in the form of places. The table below shows how funding from the High Needs Block is used in Bracknell Forest.

Area of spend	Budget (£)
College Hall (Section 19) Exclusions (slide 25)	1.8m
Tuition service (Section 19 Medical Needs)	1.6m
Early Years management costs	125k
Child Development Centre	419k
Kennel Lane special school	5.6m
Specialist Resource Provision – secondary	1m
Specialist Resource Provision - primary	800k
Element 3 – top ups, BF schools – mainstream (maintained and academies)	4.1m
Element 3 – top ups, other LA schools (maintained, academies and special schools)	3.2m
Sensory support service	274k
SALT and OT	310k
Independent non-maintained special schools (INMSS)	11m
Other funding to mainstream schools, e.g., SEN contingency with high numbers of pupils with high needs	150k
Autism support team	150k
Support for inclusion team	180k
Support for learning team	200k
Specialist support equipment	25k
Mediation and tribunals	100k

## Annex E – Proposed Funding Transfers to the High Needs Block

	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 proposed budget	Change	Available to support HNB
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Centrally Retained Schools Block Budgets:</b>				
1. Funding (varies each year dependent on variable factors in DSG)	-570.3	-583.0	-12.7	12.7
2. Post opening costs – <del>KAB primary Binfield</del> - £7,500 per new class until all open in September 2027.	22.5	15.0	-7.5	7.5
3. Support to schools managing KS1 Class Size Regulations - Discretionary requirement. 87% of LAs do not hold funding for this purpose.	170.0	0.0	-170.0	170.0
4. In-year growth allowance - Reduce eligibility to only schools opening new classes agreed with LA <del>which would be KAB Binfield as part of the initial new school funding agreement</del>	252.6	147.0	-105.6	105.6
5a. Transfer to Central Services Schools Block - proposed to cease this, transferring pressure initially to Central Schools Services Block (see below)	125.2	0	-125.2	125.2
<b>Central School Services Block Budgets (see Annex B)</b>				
6. Funding before current transfer from Centrally Retained Schools Block - Budget for Historic Commitments being reduced by DfE 20% per year. Loss needs to be covered to avoid deficit on this funding block	-854.8	-841.7	13.1	0.0
5b. Transfer from Centrally Retained Schools Block - As above, impact on CSSB block	-125.2	0	125.2	0.0
7. Remove discretionary budget for Borough Wide initiatives - To help mitigate reduction in funding for historic commitments	9.7	0.0	-9.7	0.0
8. Remove discretionary budget for Support to Schools Recruitment and Retention - To help mitigate reduction in funding for historic commitments	5.0	0.0	-5.0	0.0
9. Reduce CSSB contribution to LA statutory duties - To fully mitigate reductions in funding for CSSB <b>- £123.6k Pressure transfers to Bracknell Forest's General Fund budget</b>	290.7	167.1	-123.6	0.0
10. Further reduction in CSSB contribution to LA statutory duties - Balancing figure to achieve impact of 1% block transfer <b>- £140.0k Pressure transfers to Bracknell Forest's General Fund budget</b>	167.1	27.1	-140.0	140.0
<b>Sum carried forward to support HNB</b>				
				561.0

	<b>2023-24 Budget</b>	<b>2024-25 proposed budget</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Available to support HNB</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Sum brought forward to support HNB				561.0
<b><u>Schools Block Budgets</u></b>				
12. Capped 0.5% top slice from school budgets - <b>Equivalent to 0.42% overall top slice – see Annex A</b>	0.0	401.4	-401.4	401.4
13. Add sum carried forward				561.0
<b>14. Potential Funding Transfer into HNB (equivalent to 1% of estimated 2024/25 Schools Block DSG)</b>				<b>962.4</b>

## Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

<b>Date of Screening:</b> 27/11/23	<b>Directorate:</b> People	<b>Section:</b> SEND
<b>1. Activity to be assessed</b>	Please give full details of the activity Block transfer equivalent to 1% from the Schools Block and other DSG blocks to the High Needs Block, capped at a maximum of 0.5% per school, as part of the council's Safety Valve programme.	
<b>2. What is the activity?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Policy/strategy</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	
<b>3. Is it a new or existing activity?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>New</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Existing	
<b>4. Officer responsible for the screening</b>	Duane Chappell, Head of SEND and Specialist Support Services	
<b>5. Who are the members of the screening team?</b>	Duane Chappell, Harjit Hunjan, Kellie Williams, Chris Kiernan	
<b>6. What is the purpose of the activity?</b>	Please describe briefly its aims, objectives and main activities as relevant.	
<b>7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?</b>	Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, aged 0-25 years old, who draw funding from the High Needs Block	
<b>Protected Characteristics</b>	<b>Please tick yes or no</b>	<b>Is there an impact?</b> What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral, please give a reason.
<b>8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.</b>	Y	<b>What evidence do you have to support this?</b> E.g., equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
		The impact is positive and negative.  <b>Positive:</b> Through the money that we secure from the Safety Valve programme will mean that children's needs are identified earlier, and they are supported at an earlier stage, potentially avoiding a crisis.  Less funding will be spent on out of borough placements through the development of specialist provision in borough, meaning that CYP with SEND will be able to access education within their local communities, and without having to travel long distances every day.
		There are currently 1437 CYP in Bracknell Forest with an EHCP.  The gap between pupils with SEND needs and all other pupils is wider in BF than in other comparable LA areas, and England as a whole.  Better quality, local provision for pupils with high levels of need will provide schools with the facilities they need to improve these pupils' progress and outcomes.

			<p><b>Negative:</b></p> <p>To ensure value for money within the High Needs Block, models of service delivery will change, and this might have a negative impact on CYP and their families in terms of the services they have been used to accessing.</p>	
<b>9. Racial equality</b>		N	<p>It is not anticipated that the proposed block transfer will have either a positive or negative impact in terms of racial equality. This is because ethnicity data for school aged children from the January 2023 school census data is broadly aligned to the ethnicity of children and young people with an EHCP, so no one group will be adversely affected, either by the additional funding that will be made available within the High Needs Block, nor by the reduction in funding within other blocks within the Dedicated Schools Grant.</p>	<p><b>School Census data (January 2023) compared to EHCP data (November 2023):</b></p> <p>White (all white backgrounds) – Census 80.7% and EHCP 80%</p> <p>Black (all black backgrounds) – Census 3.1% and EHCP 3%</p> <p>Asian (all Asian backgrounds) – Census 7.1% and EHCP 5.6%</p> <p>Mixed (white and black backgrounds) – Census 2.4% and EHCP 2.3%</p> <p>Mixed (white and Asian backgrounds) – Census 2.2% and EHCP 1.3%</p> <p>Mixed (other) – Census 2.3% and EHCP 2.2%</p>
<b>10. Gender equality</b>		Y	<p>A much higher percentage of males than females have an EHCP. The sustainability of the High Needs Block and the use of funding available from the Safety Valve programme should therefore benefit males, who are much more likely to need an EHCP.</p> <p>Whilst the support offered through the additional HNB funding will not be targeted specifically at males, they will benefit positively because more males than females have an EHCP.</p>	<p>71% of EHCPs in Bracknell Forest are for boys.</p> <p>Autism is the main priority need within Bracknell Forest and funding within the HNB will be used to fund interventions and provision for CYP with autism. Of the 655 CYP with an EHCP with autism as the primary need, 75% are male and 25% are female.</p>
<b>11. Sexual orientation equality</b>			<p>We do not collect data on sexual orientation within either the school census or the EHCP dataset. Therefore, it is not possible to quantify whether there will be an impact on CYP in relation to their sexual orientation.</p>	<p>There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.</p>



<b>12. Gender re-assignment</b>			We do not collect data on gender reassignment within either the school census or the EHCP dataset. Therefore, it is not possible to quantify whether there will be an impact on CYP in relation to their gender reassignment.	There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.
<b>13. Age equality</b>	Y		The block transfer, if agreed, will strengthen the council's position in its Safety Valve negotiations with the DfE. Whilst no plans have yet been formalised, the intention is to increase the number of specialist provision places primarily at secondary school age (although the primary SRPs will also be reviewed). CYP at secondary age are currently disproportionately impacted by the lack of specialist provision in the borough, and therefore this proposal will support activity that will positively impact those CYP.	The intention is to include specific proposals within the Safety Valve programme to increase specialist provision, specifically focused on meeting the needs of CYP aged 11-16 years old who are currently negatively impacted by the lack of in borough provision.
<b>14. Religion and belief equality</b>			We do not collect data on religion and belief within either the school census or the EHCP dataset. Therefore, it is not possible to quantify whether there will be an impact on CYP in relation to their religion or belief.	There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.
<b>15. Pregnancy and maternity equality</b>			It is not envisaged that there will be an impact on pregnancy and maternity equality.	There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.
<b>16. Marriage and civil partnership equality</b>			It is not envisaged that there will be an impact on marriage and civil partnership equality.	There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.
<b>17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g., those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.</b>			A block transfer will add further pressures to the schools' budgets and will result in schools having to identify savings elsewhere in their budget. This could negatively impact on CYP without SEND, but it is considered that the benefit of achieving a sustainably high needs budget to support CYP with SEND outweighs the risk of a negative impact. To mitigate the risk, the proposal will ensure that no school will fall below the minimum per pupil funding, meaning that six schools will make no contribution to the block transfer.	

	<p>In making this assessment we have given due consideration to our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant duty. For CYP from armed forces families, they will be able to access in year transfers to local provision as this is increased as part of the Safety Valve programme, supported by the block transfer.</p> <p>We receive regular feedback from parents and carers that access to specialist provision is challenging and that seeking to secure appropriate provision for their CYP can be stressful. The block transfer proposal will strengthen our Safety Valve programme proposal, and a successful Safety Valve deal will unlock the potential for significant investment in developing local provision.</p>		
<b>18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?</b>	No adverse impact has been identified.		
<b>19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?</b>	The most significant impact will be for CYP with SEND in the borough (see section on disability equality above).		
<b>20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?</b>		N	N/A
<b>21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?</b>	A formal consultation with headteachers and chairs of governors on the proposal for a block transfer will take place from 27 November to 8 December 2023. Data from this consultation will help with better understanding the impact.		
<b>22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?</b>		N	<p>Please explain your decision. If you are not proceeding to a full equality impact assessment, make sure you have the evidence to justify this decision should you be challenged.</p> <p>If you are proceeding to a full equality impact assessment, please contact <a href="mailto:Harjit.Hunjan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk">Harjit.Hunjan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Milestone/Success Criteria</b>
Formal consultation on proposals with headteachers and chairs of governors	27 Nov to 8 Dec 2023	Paul Clark	Consultation conducted and analysis of responses complete

Decision by Schools Forum on proposal for a block transfer	13 Dec	Paul Clark	Decision by Schools Forum, followed by referral to SoS for approval.
Regular engagement and consultation with headteachers, chairs of governors	Ongoing	Grainne Siggins	Coproduction of Safety Valve plan with school leaders
<b>24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</b>	SEND		
<b>25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?</b>	Improvements in data quality to ensure we are able to effectively monitor the impact on groups with protected characteristics.		
<b>26. Assistant Director/Director signature.</b>	Signature: D. Chappell		Date: 27/11/23

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