

	<p align="center">Schools Forum 25 February 2021</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>

High Needs Block 2021/22

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	N/A
No. of Appendices:	Two Appendix 1 – High Needs Block Budget 2021-22 Appendix 2 – Proposed Bandings 2021-22
Background Papers:	Prior Financial reports to Schools Forum
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1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. This report informs Schools Forum of the detailed High Needs Block budget for adoption in 2021/22.

2. Recommendations

2.1. That Schools Forum notes the report.

3. Summary

3.1. The High Needs Block budget for 2021/22 is set to balance to available resources including the £1.2m Schools Block transfer. The total budget is £67.6m.

4. High Needs Block funding

- 4.1. The High Needs block funding has been confirmed at £66.4m for 2021/22. This is £6m more than that received in 2020/21, and represents a 10% increase.
- 4.2. In addition, the Schools Forum has approved a Schools block transfer of 0.5% totalling £1.2m. Total funding for the High Needs Block in 2021/22 is £67.6m.

5. Changes to the 2021/22 High Needs Block budget

- 5.1. The Schools Forum sub group for High Needs met on 11 February 2021 to discuss the High Needs block budget, and the final detailed budget is provided in Appendix 1.
- 5.2. Where the number of places within special provisions has increased, the place funding and top up funding budgets have been changed accordingly. This can be seen on Appendix 1.
- 5.3. Three options were presented to the HNB Sub-Group and those options are detailed in the “Banding Review” paper which is another item on this Forum’s agenda. The budget assumes that the top up funding rates will remain the same for the mainstream schools and ARPs but the special school top up funding rates will increase by 7.5% for bands 1 – 5 and by 8.1% for band 6 to be in line with neighbouring London Boroughs. The budget also includes £0.5m set aside for a SEN support pilot in mainstream schools. The pilot is a mechanism proposed to support a reduction in the demand for EHCPs. The proposed 2021/22 banded funding rates are provided in Appendix 2.
- 5.4. There is no change to the recoupment budget of £1.2m which remains at the same as 2020/21. This is an income budget which offsets expenditure on pupils from other boroughs. This budget is in line with the amounts actually recovered.
- 5.5. The budget for post 16 provision has increased by £0.7m to a total of £3.9m. The council will continue to robustly challenge the ‘Element 2’ charges, of £6k each, from further education providers following ESFA clarification that these costs should not be passed onto the student’s home local authority. This should result in a lower average cost for post-16 provision.

6. Risks and Challenges

- 6.1. The main risk against this budget remains the rising number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and as at the end of January 2021 number there where 2,819 CYP with an EHCP compared to January 2020 where the number was 2,426 representing a 16% increase. It is yet to be understood if this increase may partly be due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. With in-borough special provision becoming full, greater use will be made of out of borough and independent settings which are more expensive than placing children in Brent schools.

- 6.2. There remains the risk of price inflation for SEND provision in out of borough and independent settings where provisions are also seeking over inflation prices to deal with pressures including pressures arising from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This can be partly mitigated by effective commissioning arrangements, such as using the WLA.
- 6.3. The available resources have been allocated within the constraints of the funding for the provision of SEND. The budget aims to achieve an in-year balance between expenditure and income, and does not reduce the forecast deficit that will be brought forward from 2020/21. However another item on this Schools Forum agenda i.e. the “Updated DSG High Needs Block Management Plan” identifies the key strategies to recover part of the deficit over a number of years.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The financial implications have been detailed in the body of this paper.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1. There are no legal implications for this report.

9. Equality Implications

- 9.1. The key groups affected by the proposals are children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) aged 0-25 in Brent. The Council is committed to inclusive education for all children and young people with SEND in our mainstream schools, enhanced resource schools and special schools.
- 9.2. The budget supports the needs of children and young people with SEND to be met through evidence based interventions and aims to reduce reliance on high cost placements in the non-maintained and independent sector, by ensuring that children with SEND can get a good education at a school close to their home.
- 9.3. The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and there are no equality implications.

10. Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 10.1. Not applicable.

11. Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

- 11.1. Not applicable.

Report sign off:

Gail Tolley

Strategic Director of Children and Young People