
SCHOOLS' FORUM

Tuesday 28 January 2025 – 10am

**Conference Suite
Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning,
Brierton Lane**

A G E N D A

- | | | |
|----|---|------------------|
| 1. | Apologies | Chair |
| 2. | Minutes from Schools' Forum meeting on 10 December 2024 and Matters Arising | Chair |
| 3. | Schools Block Update 2025/26 – report for information | Amanda Whitehead |
| 4. | Growth Fund Policy – report for decision | Amanda Whitehead |
| 5. | HNB Q3 Outturn – report for information | Amanda Whitehead |
| 6. | HNB Budget Requirement 2025/26 – report for information | Amanda Whitehead |
| 7. | Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEXs) (Standing Item) – report for information | Emma Rutherford |
| 8. | SEND and AP Change Programme Update
- Report for information | Fiona Stobbs |

Date and Time of Next Forum Meeting –
Wednesday 19 February, 10am at the CETL

<p>Schools' Forum Meeting</p> <p>10 December 2024</p>

Attendees:**Members**

Carole Bradley (Chair) (Academy Primary)
 Nicola Dunn (Academy Primary)
 Gillian Hood (Academy Primary)
 John Hardy (Academy Primary)
 Colette Hogarth (Diocese RC)
 Phil Pritchard (Academy Primary)
 Caroline Reed (Academy Primary)
 Emma Rutherford (Horizon School)
 Sue Sharpe (Governor)
 Mark Tilling (Secondary)
 David Turner (Primary)
 Lee Walker (Academy Primary)
 Zoe Westley (Academy Special)
 Vicki Wilson (Diocese C of E)
 Leanne Yates (Academy Primary)

Local Authority Officers

Sandra Shears (SSh)
 (Childrens' Finance)
 Fiona Stobbs (FS) (Inclusive
 Learning and SEND)
 Jo Stubbs (JS) (Administrator)
 Jane Watt (JW) (Children's
 Finance)

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1 Apologies -</p> <p>Chris Connor (Primary) Sara Crawshaw (Academy Secondary) Linda Richardson (Early Years PVI)</p>	
<p>2 Minutes of the Last Meeting – 15 October 2024</p> <p>Minutes approved with the following adjustment:</p> <p>that the 'What Would It Take' panel would be comprised of a number of representatives from across the relevant sectors not simply local authority officers.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>AOB – Special Schools Cost Model – ZW had been advised by the Assistant Director (Education) that a Working Group would not be possible. She queried the reasoning behind this.. JWa felt that there had been a misunderstanding and confirmed that it was intended to hold a meeting once all the information was in place. Officers were waiting for the relevant information from Catcote School and once this was received all information</p>	

	<p>would be shared with senior management to ensure principles were clear. A meeting with Catcote and Springwell Schools would then take place however this would not be in the form of a Working Group. Said meeting would be convened as soon as possible and if a Working Group was then deemed necessary this would be looked at.</p> <p>AOB - In-year admissions vacancies (funded from SEMH pot) – 2 people had been appointed to start in 2025.</p> <p>AOB – ‘What would it take’ Panel – ER to pull together a potential membership group in the absence of the Assistant Director (Education)</p>	
3	<p>Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEXs)</p> <p>This is a standing item on the agenda for Schools Forum</p> <p>There are currently 88 students on roll at Horizon/Haven, 6 additional since the last meeting. Three of these were Y7 students, some of which had led to discussions with their primary schools. Members noted that discussions with primary heads would take place where Y7 pupils who had previously attended their school were subject to a PEX but this appeared not to be happening consistently.</p> <p>The Chair referred to a recent North East meeting in regards to PEX, which was a high priority for the whole region. Numbers of PEX and suspensions were much higher in the North East than in other areas across the UK with certain education trusts and schools particularly concerning. Attendees had pledged to look at this collectively but other services also had to play their part.</p> <p>The continuing increase in PEXs was at a significant additional cost to the High Needs Block and had resulted in a lack of space at Horizon and amendments to their timetable have had to be made. Forum members acknowledged any alternative provision brings an additional cost and an additional pressure to the funding block.</p> <p>ZW referred to a report on this issue that had been presented to Children’s Services Committee. ER confirmed that this had been brought to Committee due to Councillor concerns at this ongoing situation. Members had asked that a Working Party be set up to investigate the reasons and look at what could be done to improve matters. ER would keep the Forum updated on this.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	

4	<p>Indicative School Block Budgets 2025/26</p> <p>ESFA had published indicative National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for 2025/26 based on pupil numbers from the October 2023 census. However final allocations would not be made available until mid-December so the modelling officers could do was limited.</p> <p>A decision on the MFG was needed to be made at this meeting and a further meeting would need to be called in January 2025 when full information was available. Forum noted the decision to roll separate grants for teachers pay, teachers pensions employer contributions and core schools budget into the NFF for 2025/26.</p> <p>A change to the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee had been announced for 2025/26 allowing a range of -0.5% to 0%. The Maximum MFG that could be applied is therefore 0%. The reasoning behind this was given within the report and expanded upon by officers in the meeting.</p> <p>While the final October 2024 census numbers were not yet available projections carried out by the local authority indicated the increase since October 2023 would show a reduction in overall pupil numbers.. It was suggested that this might be due to an increase in the number of pupils being home educated but it was also noted that there had been a decline in primary numbers in recent years which would naturally move into secondary numbers. Heads needed to be aware that this would mean a funding reduction.</p> <p>DT queried the risk of growth funding being reduced if not fully spent. JWa explained that the funding was based on Office for National Statistics data and confirmed that information had to be supplied to DfE each year on how it was being used. .</p> <p>Following discussions members agreed that an online meeting should be scheduled in January involving all school heads to allow explanation of the final allocations once updated information had been received and reviewed... SSh confirmed that finance officers would set a date and inform Forum members in due course.</p> <p>Decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the formula changes for 2025/26 be noted • That the application of a maximum 0.0% MFG be approved with the application of an appropriate cap to make this affordable for 2025/26 ISBs. 	
5	<p>Central School Services Block Budget Update 2025/26</p> <p>ESFA had published indicative National Funding Formula allocations for 2025/26. The provisional allocation for the Central Services Block was</p>	

	<p>£0.691m. Schools Forum had previously approved budget requirements for historic and ongoing commitments which would cost £0.601m leaving an estimated £0.090m remaining. Approval had already been given to transfer this surplus to the High Needs Block. Any changes resulting from updates caused by the final October 2024 census numbers were not likely to be material.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>That the report be noted</p>	
6	<p>Meeting concluded 10:40am</p> <p>Date and time of next Forum meeting to be confirmed</p>	

OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LOG

Meeting	Description	Owner
15/10/24	"What Would it Take" Panel to be considered and established	ER
15/10/24	Meeting to discuss principles arising from year 1 and 2 of the Special School Cost Model Arrangement	AW / JWa / SSh

Financial Year 2024/25: Children's Services Committee – Log of Schools' Forum
Recommendations and Committee Decisions

Last Updated: 6 December 2024

Committee Date	Report	Recommendation and Decision Details
19/11/24	Dedicated Schools Grant (Former Education Services Grant rate per pupil) – Disapplication Request	<p>The Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agreed the 2025/26 funding rate at £60 per pupil/place. b) Agreed to submit the disapplication request to the Secretary of State to set the Education Services General Duties rate at £60 per pupil/place for 2025/26. c) Noted this will be the ninth consecutive year the local authority has applied for disapplication and that the previous eight applications have been successful.

**Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 28 January 2025
From Amanda Whitehead – Assistant Director Education**

Item 3: Update - Indicative Schools Block Budgets 2025/26

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide updated information on the 2025/26 Schools Block indicative funding. ESFA (The Education and Skills Funding Agency) issued updated funding information on 17 December 2024 based on October 2024 census numbers and pupil characteristics. The information included the Hartlepool growth funding allocation.
- 1.2 At the request of Schools' Forum, a townwide head teacher meeting took place on Monday 13 January 2025 to outline the planned Individual School Budget (ISB) for 2025/26.

2. Background

- 2.1 In consultation with their Schools' Forum, local authorities are required to consider how they set ISBs for 2025/26.
- 2.2 Forum have already agreed the following principles affecting 2025/26 ISBs:
- Application of the maximum MFG (Minimum Funding Guarantee) of 0.0%;
 - Transfer of 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block;
 - Implementation of a new growth fund policy, with disbursement of £0.105m in year;
 - Application of an appropriate cap to ensure affordability.

3. Indicative NFF 2025/26

- 3.1 Indicative 2025/26 figures were issued by ESFA on 17 December reflecting October 2024 census numbers and pupil characteristics.
- 3.2 The following table shows the Hartlepool Schools Block allocation of £87.471m based on October 2024 census numbers. This shows an increase of £0.508m for 2024/25, or 0.6%.

Schools Block	Pupil Numbers (Oct 2024)	2025/26 Funding (£m)
Primary	7,594	44.371
Secondary	5,629	42.335
Premises		0.588
Growth		0.177
NFF Schools Block 2025/26		87.471
NFF Schools Block 2024/25, including grants rolled into the formula in 2025/26		86.963
Funding increase		0.508
Percentage increase in funding		0.6%

The **£87.471m** compares with the equivalent figure of **£86.963m** for 2024/25 (Schools block NFF plus the separate 2024 to 2025 teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG), the teachers' pensions employer contribution grant (TPECG) 2024, and the annualised core schools budget grant (CSBG) in 2024/25), an increase of 0.6%.

- 3.3 After growth fund disbursement and the 0.5% block transfer to the High Needs Block, funding available for ISBs in 2025/26 is £86.930m, a slight reduction (0.1%) from total ISBs in 2024/25.
- 3.4 The table below outlines the use of £87.471m Schools Block funding for 2025/26.

School Budget Share 2025/26	Proposed Budget £m
Schools Block funding	87.471
Growth disbursement	(0.105)
Transfer-out to High Needs Block	(0.436)
School Budget Share Proposed 2025/26	86.930
School Budget Share Decrease from 2024/25 (£m)	(0.090)
School Budget Share Decrease from 2024/25 (%)	(0.1%)

- 3.5 After applying the maximum MFG of 0.0%, a cap of 0.38% is required to limit ISBs to the funding available of £86.930m.
- 3.6 One Hartlepool primary school fails the Minimum Per Pupil Funding (MPPF) guarantee in the 2025/26 formula. As required by the regulations, the school's ISB has been uplifted to the guaranteed amount (£4,955 per pupil). As such, this results in an increase per pupil of 0.61% for the school (above the cap of 0.38%).
- 3.7 Appendix A provides an anonymous listing of ISBs for 2025/26.

4. Growth Fund Disbursement 2025/26

- 4.1 Forum agreed the principles of a new growth fund policy at their meeting on 24 September 2024. Five schools will benefit in 2025/26 with a total disbursement of £0.105m.
- 4.2 The new growth fund policy has been drafted and approval will be sought from Schools' Forum as a separate item on this agenda.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Forum is recommended to:
- note the confirmed ISBs contained in this report;
 - note that the Hartlepool ISB information has been submitted to DfE by the statutory date of 22 January 2025.

APPENDIX A: ISBs 2025/26

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
School Reference	MPPF Test Result	2025/26 Pre MFG Budget (Excl ESG and De-Del)	MFG 0.00%	Cap 0.38%	2025/26 Post MFG Budget	2024/25 post MFG Budget (incl TPAG, TPECG and CSBG grants)	Budget Increase +£ / Decrease (£)	Budget Increase +% / Decrease (%)	Per Pupil Increase %
1	PASS	1,753,218	0	(21,316)	1,731,902	1,863,304	(131,401)	(7.05%)	0.38%
2	PASS	938,856	0	(9,980)	928,876	883,703	45,173	5.11%	0.38%
3	PASS	9,632,127	0	(125,203)	9,506,924	9,519,502	(12,578)	(0.13%)	0.38%
4	PASS	7,793,631	0	(64,874)	7,728,757	8,111,215	(382,459)	(4.72%)	0.38%
5	PASS	10,312,687	0	(59,540)	10,253,147	10,132,334	120,813	1.19%	0.38%
6	PASS	1,045,023	0	(5,498)	1,039,525	1,038,795	729	0.07%	0.38%
7	PASS	1,855,039	0	(31,201)	1,823,838	1,726,243	97,595	5.65%	0.38%
8	PASS	555,376	0	(3,547)	551,829	542,232	9,597	1.77%	0.38%
9	PASS	1,666,017	0	0	1,666,017	1,689,962	(23,945)	(1.42%)	0.11%
10	FAIL	1,448,075	0	0	1,448,075	1,457,454	(9,379)	(0.64%)	0.61%
11	PASS	2,475,054	0	(9,025)	2,466,029	2,324,814	141,215	6.07%	0.38%
12	PASS	2,038,072	0	(47,351)	1,990,720	1,891,458	99,262	5.25%	0.38%
13	PASS	2,235,588	0	(15,058)	2,220,530	2,244,636	(24,106)	(1.07%)	0.38%
14	PASS	1,860,569	0	(26,203)	1,834,366	1,832,676	1,690	0.09%	0.38%
15	PASS	1,835,269	0	(31,168)	1,804,101	1,756,400	47,701	2.72%	0.38%
16	PASS	1,095,312	0	(12,122)	1,083,190	1,142,943	(59,753)	(5.23%)	0.38%
17	PASS	527,532	44,015	0	571,546	595,153	(23,607)	(3.97%)	0.00%
18	PASS	9,834,489	0	(71,096)	9,763,393	9,695,618	67,776	0.70%	0.38%
19	PASS	5,122,423	7,833	0	5,130,256	5,386,491	(256,235)	(4.76%)	0.00%
20	PASS	1,177,564	0	(14,829)	1,162,736	1,108,773	53,962	4.87%	0.38%
21	PASS	1,494,124	2,909	0	1,497,033	1,501,549	(4,517)	(0.30%)	0.00%
22	PASS	722,559	0	(33,166)	689,392	742,465	(53,072)	(7.15%)	0.38%
23	PASS	1,197,758	0	(9,871)	1,187,886	1,224,266	(36,379)	(2.97%)	0.38%
24	PASS	535,418	38,228	0	573,646	583,414	(9,768)	(1.67%)	0.00%
25	PASS	2,033,739	0	(40,796)	1,992,942	2,026,412	(33,470)	(1.65%)	0.38%
26	PASS	2,005,010	0	0	2,005,010	2,011,211	(6,201)	(0.31%)	0.19%
27	PASS	1,446,069	0	0	1,446,069	1,435,629	10,440	0.73%	0.24%
28	PASS	1,770,045	0	(24,457)	1,745,588	1,661,871	83,717	5.04%	0.38%
29	PASS	2,074,471	0	(20,988)	2,053,483	2,021,800	31,683	1.57%	0.38%
30	PASS	1,378,115	0	(9,411)	1,368,705	1,380,919	(12,214)	(0.88%)	0.38%
31	PASS	2,334,865	0	(34,324)	2,300,542	2,407,168	(106,626)	(4.43%)	0.38%
32	PASS	2,032,568	1,913	0	2,034,481	2,053,612	(19,132)	(0.93%)	0.00%
33	PASS	2,058,105	0	(54,056)	2,004,049	1,634,059	369,990	22.64%	0.38%
34	PASS	659,652	8,174	0	667,826	700,529	(32,704)	(4.67%)	0.00%
35	PASS	668,608	0	(11,006)	657,602	691,608	(34,007)	(4.92%)	0.38%
TOTAL		87,613,025	103,071	(786,086)	86,930,010	87,020,220	(90,210)		

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 28 January 2025
From Amanda Whitehead – Assistant Director Education

Item 4 : Growth Fund Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hartlepool began to receive a growth fund allocation within the Schools Block of the National Funding Formula (NFF) from 2019/20.
- 1.2 Appropriate use of growth funding is strongly prescribed within the regulations so a growth fund policy must have regard to these limitations.
- 1.3 As a minimum, use of the growth fund must be linked to basic need and not to the “popularity” of a particular school. Also, the definition of growth must relate to the requirement for a new class or half-class size. New guidance from 2024/25 deemed that disbursement of growth funding to appropriate schools must be at a minimum of £1,570 per pupil (the primary growth factor amount per pupil). As the previous Hartlepool policy was disbursed using AWPU (Average Weighted per Pupil Unit), this approach has been continued in the new growth policy.
- 1.4 The growth fund policy must apply equally to all schools.

2. Background

- 2.1 Schools' Forum agreed an initial growth fund policy in the summer of 2019. The policy was based on any increase in Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) requested by the local authority. As such, two secondary schools received disbursements from the growth fund for a five-year period.
- 2.2 As there were no longer any active disbursements from the growth fund for 2024/25 onwards, Forum agreed to review the policy. Alongside this, Forum received verbal updates from head teachers that expressed a high level of concern over the lack of funding for pupils that joined the school after October census.
- 2.3 At their meeting on 24 September 2024, Schools' Forum agreed the principles of a new growth policy to become effective from financial year 2025/26. The policy has now been documented.

3. Key Components of the New Growth Fund Policy

- 3.1 The draft growth fund policy is attached as Appendix A to this report.
- 3.2 During the year, any growth in pupils between census points will be compared back to the prior October census (i.e. the census upon which schools are funded). Where pupil movements exceed 15 pupils (deemed as a half class size by DfE), the school will receive a disbursement from the growth fund. To reflect the timing of new growth fund allocations, the disbursement will be made in the following financial year.
- 3.3 Disbursement will be based on the number of pupils exceeding 15 pupils at the appropriate AWPU (Average Weighted Pupil Unit) for primary or secondary. Secondary will be an average of KS3 and KS4. This calculation will be pro-rata for the

number of school weeks that the growth relates to. For example, pupil growth above 15 between the October 2024 and January 2025 census would be pro-rata 14 weeks.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Forum is recommended to:

- Review and approve the documented growth fund policy at Appendix A of this report.

APPENDIX A: Growth Fund Policy for Approval

Growth Fund Policy : Eligibility and Disbursement Process

ELIGIBILITY

A school (both maintained schools and academies for the avoidance of doubt) would become eligible for growth funding where the following applies:

Eligibility for Growth Funding: If a school experiences an increase in pupil numbers greater than 15 that is linked to basic need (as opposed to the popularity of a particular school), the school will be entitled to Growth Funding for each additional pupil beyond the 15. The threshold of 15 pupils represents a half class size as per DfE recommendation.

DISBURSEMENT

The disbursement of growth funding will follow a structured process to ensure schools receive additional financial support.

1. **Calculation of Funding:** The additional funding is calculated based on the number of pupils above the 15-pupil threshold, using the current year's Average Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU). These calculations will be completed at each census point.
2. **Fund Transfer:** The calculated growth funding is paid in full at the beginning of the following financial year, reflecting the lagged funding approach.
3. **Disbursement:** The allocated funds are then disbursed to the school, through the local authority, to help manage the increased student numbers. This will be completed via journal entries for Local Authority Schools and external payment to Academies.

ANNUAL OVERVIEW

1. **Notification of Allocations:** Growth funding allocations from the government are included in the DSG figures, which are typically published in December each year.
2. **Reporting to Schools Forum:** A report will be presented to the Schools Forum as part of the annual budget process, detailing any disbursements from the Growth Funding that have been calculated. Calculations will always relate to the prior year.
3. **Addressing Shortfalls:** If there is a shortfall in growth funding in a particular year, the disbursement will be top sliced to the level of growth funding available.
4. **Managing Excess Funding:** Any remaining growth funding following disbursement will be used towards the School Block transfer to the High Needs Block. In line with the Council's DSG management plan at least a 0.5% transfer will be requested in future years.

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 28 January 2025
From Amanda Whitehead, Assistant Director – Education

Item 5: High Needs Block (HNB) Projected Outturn 2024/25

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the projected 2024/25 outturn for high needs services based on spending to the end of quarter three.

2. Background

- 2.1 Financial pressures affecting the provision of services for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are reported to Schools' Forum at regular intervals.
- 2.2 Projected outturns for 2024/25 based on worse-case, mid-case and best-case have been prepared.
- 2.3 The final position for 2023/24 was a year-end overspend of £2.348m.
- 2.4 Children's Services Committee approved proposals from Officers to set a budget requirement exceeding the available HNB funding by £2.171m in 2024/25.

3. 2024/25 Block Funding

- 3.1 The latest Hartlepool HNB allocation for 2024/25 is £19.520m. Schools' Forum agreed to transfer unused growth funding from the schools block in 2024/25 of £0.334m. This provides total funding of **£19.854m** before recoupment for academy place funding.
- 3.2 Academy place funding will be recouped (or deducted) at a total of £3.473m.
- 3.3 The high needs budget after recoupment and including the school's block transfer is **£16.381m**.

4. 2024/25 Outturn Projection

- 4.1 Based on spending to quarter 3, along with estimated expenditure for the remainder of the financial year, the projected outturn position for high needs ranges from £3.951m overspend best case to £4.521m overspend worse case. This is summarised by each area of spend in the table below.
- 4.2 The mid-case projected overspend of £4.475m is an increase of £0.405m from the reported projection at quarter 2. The increases relate primarily to top-ups and support for ARPs (increased by £0.260m) and Individual Pupil Support (increased by £0.113m).
- 4.2 The paragraphs that follow explain the main variances to budget based on the mid-case projection of £4.475m.

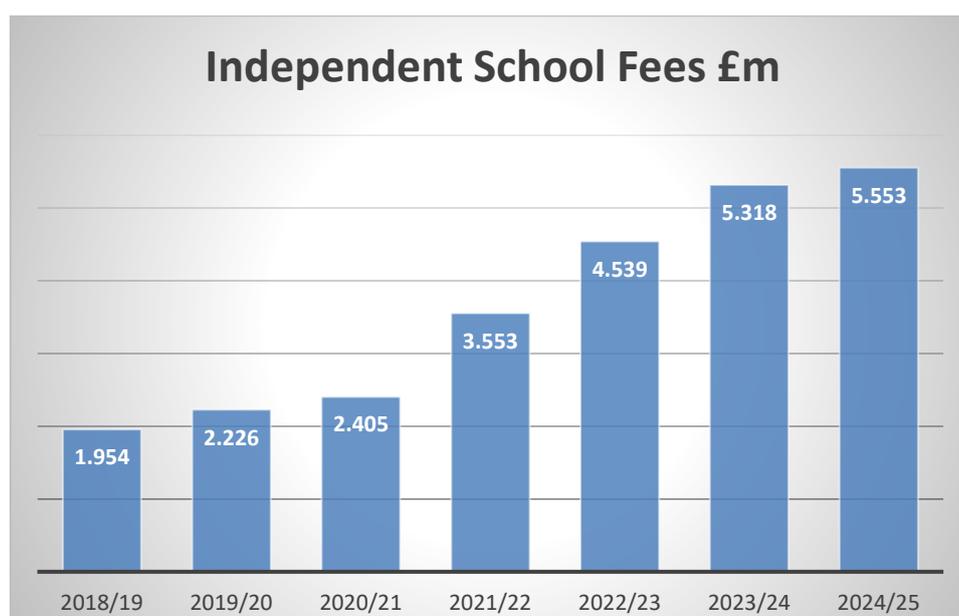
High Needs Expenditure 2024/25	Worse Case		Mid Case		Best Case	
	Projection £m	Variance Over/(under) Spend £m	Projection £m	Variance Over/(under) Spend £m	Projection £m	Variance Over/(under) Spend £m
ESFA recoupment – academy place funding	3.473	-	3.473	-	3.473	-
Place funding (LA)	0.696	-	0.696	-	0.696	-
Independent school fees	5.799	0.658	5.553	0.412	5.330	0.189
Out of Area top-ups	0.432	(0.020)	0.432	(0.020)	0.430	(0.022)
Top-up funding and support	10.161	1.324	10.361	1.524	10.063	1.225
Horizon School and AP	1.617	0.425	1.617	0.425	1.617	0.425
Post-16 top-ups	1.471	(0.037)	1.471	(0.037)	1.471	(0.037)
Support services	0.726	-	0.726	-	0.726	-
Approved budget shortfall		2.171		2.171		2.171
Total projection	24.375	4.521	24.329	4.475	23.806	3.951

4.3 Local authority place funding (on budget).

This budget head covers payment of place funding to ARPs within maintained schools. Outturn is expected to be in line with budget.

4.4 Independent school fees (£0.412m overspend)

The mid-case projected spend for independent school placements is £5.553m. This represents current commitments plus 1 new place commissioned for spring 2025 at a cost of £23,000 per term.



The final spend in 2023/24 was £5.318m compared to our estimate for 2024/25 of £5.553m. Although still an increase in cost, this is the first year that the trend has slowed significantly as illustrated in the chart above. This change is linked to provision

at the new SEMH Free School where several pupils are now placed that would otherwise have required independent school provision.

4.5 Out of authority top-ups (£0.020m underspend)

The mid-case projected spend for out of authority placements is £0.432m. This compares to expenditure of £0.530m in 2023/24. The decrease in expected costs from last year's outturn largely relates to 17 school leavers 2023/24. There have only been 7 new starters to offset the 17 leavers.

4.6 Exclusions, including Horizon School (£0.425m overspend)

The outturn projection is outlined in more detail in a separate report on this same agenda.

4.7 Top-up funding and support (£1.523m overspend)

This budget heading includes funding for Individual Pupil Support (IPS) and funding for Special Schools, the new SEMH Free School and ARP top-ups.

The mid-case projected spend for Individual Pupil Support (IPS) is £3.242m, an increase of £0.113m from the quarter 2 estimate. The projection represents current commitments and the assumption to fund a further 10 new funding agreements for 3 months over spring 2025 at a range of 5i. We have also assumed growth in exceptional/group funding of £0.050m. This gives a projected overspend of £0.707m. The newly established Seeking Support Panels continue to challenge and scrutinise all new funding requests. Despite the increased challenge, underlying need appears to be continuing to rise. As a result, the new process is not yet yielding any financial benefit, although it is likely that additional costs are being avoided.

The cost of ARPs is showing a projected spend of £1.512m which is an overspend of £0.272m when compared to the original budget. Pupils assigned to ARP provision are displaying increasingly complex needs and this has prompted a banding review for a significant number of pupils. The associated spend has been recorded during quarter 3.

The Special School projected overspend of £0.038m reflects a part year effect of the cost arrangements for Academic Year 2024-25. Additional places were commissioned for both Springwell and Catcote that were not included in budget assumptions. The additional pupils were funded at cost so were outside of the 3% budget cap.

The new SEMH Free School has now opened for the 2024 academic year with an initial 30 places. Lengthy discussions with ESFA have confirmed that, although place funding will be paid direct to the new Free School by DfE this year, funding for top-up payments will not flow through the HNB formula until 2025/26. This means that the cost of top-ups is not covered by any funding in the current financial year.

The Free School overspend of £0.480m represents the pro-rata cost of top-up for 30 places, one agreed exceptional funding placement, plus 4 further estimates for pupils requiring additional support above the standard top up.

The Hearing/Visually impaired joint agreement is showing a overspend of £0.026m owing to a 6.5% uplift on 23-24 fees from Middlesbrough Borough Council that was not known prior to budget setting.

4.8 Post-16 top-up funding (£0.037m underspend)

The mid-case projected spend for Post-16 Top ups is showing an underspend of £0.037m. First term payments of the new academic year have been made, and it is assumed that second term payments will be of equal value.

4.9 Support Services (on budget)

The contribution from high needs to local authority support services is assumed at budget level.

4.10 The approved budget shortfall of £2.171m is added to the outturn position as this represents unfunded expenditure included in the budget headings above.

5 DSG Balances Summary

5.1 There is an existing negative reserve balance recorded against the DSG Block of £1.589m. Should the mid-case projection of £4.475m included in this report materialise, there would be a total high needs block deficit reserve of £6.064m.

5.2 The final outturn position for 2024/25 will be updated in the DSG Management Plan.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Forum is recommended to note the contents of the report.

**Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 28 January 2025
From Amanda Whitehead – Assistant Director, Education**

Item 6: High Needs Block Budget Requirement 2025/26

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to introduce the draft budget requirement for High Needs Block (HNB) spending in 2025/26. A further report is planned for the Forum meeting of 19 February 2025 before Forum is asked to finalise recommendations to Children's Services Committee on the 18 March 2025.
- 1.2 This first report focuses on the budget requirement for existing provision. The figures presented include both volume changes and inflationary / price changes. The report does not contain costs of proposals linked to strategic changes. Such changes include the local authority's planned response to increase provision, ensure that existing provision remains fit for purpose or plans to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND. These strategic changes will be presented in the report to Forum on 19 February.
- 1.3 Planned costs to deliver education for permanently excluded pupils will also be included in the February report. At this stage, the provisional budget for 2025/26 is assumed at the projected cost of the service in 2024/25. This figure is expected to increase in 2025/26.
- 1.4 The two reports and associated discussions will bring together the full budget requirement proposals for the HNB in 2025/26 for onward recommendations to Children's Services Committee.

2. Background

- 2.1 Schools' Forum is consulted on the proposed HNB budget requirement each year for onward decision making by Children's Services Committee.
- 2.2 From financial year 2023/24, a HNB budget exceeding the funding available was approved by Children's Services Committee. The budget shortfall for 2023/24 was £2.147m, with an actual shortfall of £2.348m. The budget shortfall for 2024/25 is £2.171m, against a forecast shortfall of £4.475m as at quarter 3.
- 2.3 At 31 March 2024, the overall Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit stood at £1.589m. This is expected to increase to £6.064m by this financial year end.
- 2.4 As the Council is now in a DSG deficit position, DfE required a DSG Management planning covering a 10-year period. The plan has been submitted and approved and DfE require regular updates. The latest update suggests a provisional deficit position of £34.961m by 31 March 2031.

3. High Needs Block Funding 2025/26

- 3.1 In 2025 to 2026, high needs funding is increasing by £1 billion to help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of supporting children and young people with SEND. Most of this increase has been allocated through the high needs NFF, which

sees a 9% increase in funding on a national level. Hartlepool, allocation before recoupment has increased by £1.667m, or 8.53%.

- 3.2 The following table presents the high needs block allocation for 2025/26 published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on 28 November 2024.

High Needs Block	2025/26 Funding £m
DSG High Needs Block Allocation (before academy place funding is deducted)	21.297
Recoupment for academy funding	(3.784)
Net High Needs Funding 2025/26	17.513

- 3.3 There are several expected adjustments to the recoupment value of £3.784m shown in the table above. These are:

- Increase of 32 primary ARP places from September 2025;
- Increase of 5 places at post-16 from September 2025.

- 3.3 The revised High Needs funding (after recoupment) for 2025/26 after these adjustments is **£17.383m**.

4. 2025/26 Budget Requirement Baseline

- 4.1 The following table summarises the estimated budget requirement for 2025/26, with a comparison to 2024/25.

Budget Area	£m 2024/25 Budget	£m 2025/26 Proposed	£m 2025/26 Increase (+) / Decrease (-)
Budget Area	£m	£m	£m
Independent Schools	5.141	5.082	(0.059)
Special Schools	4.674	6.056	1.382
IPS	2.535	3.339	0.804
ARPs	1.936	2.435	0.499
Post-16	1.507	1.548	0.041
Exclusions and AP	1.192	1.617	0.425
Support Services	0.692	0.713	0.021
Out of Area	0.452	0.442	(0.010)
Early Intervention	0.217	0.223	0.006
HI/VI	0.205	0.251	0.046
TOTAL	18.551	21.706	3.155

Block Funding Estimate	16.380	17.383
Est Funding Gap	2.171	4.323

- 4.2 The provisional budget requirement for 2025/26 suggests a funding gap of £4.323m. This compares to the projected outturn as at quarter 3 of £4.475m. As outlined in the

introduction to this report, the provisional budget does not yet include costs to deliver strategic change, or the full cost requirement for Exclusions. Each budget area is considered in more detail in the paragraphs that follow.

4.3 Independent Schools

This year's budget	£5.141m
Projected Outturn	£5.553m
Next year's budget proposal	£5.082m

Although an overspend of £0.412m is anticipated at quarter 3, the budget estimate was deliberately challenging and aimed to restrict new placements to a minimum. Independent school fees are the key area of mitigation in the DSG Management Plan as we aim to reduce the need for costly placements outside of the town wherever possible. The SEMH Free School has several pupils on roll that would otherwise have been placed in an Independent School at a significantly higher cost.

During 2025/26, we expect a total of 21 leavers as they end year 11 of education.

The budget requirement assumes a total of 66 placements at an average cost of £77k per placement.

4.4 Special Schools

This year's budget	£4.674m
Projected Outturn	£5.192m
Next year's budget proposal	£6.056m

This budget area includes the cost arrangements for Catcote and Springwell schools that is payable in addition to their place funding recouped by DfE. Pre-16 place funding across the two schools is £2.280m in 2025/26. The price for each cost arrangement is already agreed to the end of academic year 2024-25. The new academic year cost arrangements for 2025-26 are assumed at a 3% increase within the budget proposal and within the DSG Management Plan.

This budget area also includes the SEMH Free School. Although the Free School was assumed to be cost neutral in the 2024/25 budget, top-up funding is not covered by DfE because of a funding lag. This is the primary reason for the projected overspend of £0.518m in the current year.

In 2025/26, DfE will continue to pay place funding to the Free School direct, with places rising from 30 to 41 from September 2025. An element of funding is expected for the Free School once the import / export adjustment is completed during summer 2025. However, the level of funding is uncertain at this stage. Therefore, the budget proposal for 2025/26 includes 100% of top-up funding for the planned Free School places in 2025/26.

4.5 Individual Pupil Support (including Group Funding)

This year's budget	£2.535m
Projected Outturn	£3.242m
Next year's budget proposal	£3.339m

Despite the introduction of increased scrutiny and peer challenge through the Seeking Support Panels, the cost of financial support through IPS and group funding agreements continues to rise.

At quarter 3, there are 65 group funded arrangements in place at a total cost of £0.959m. There are 411 pupils funded via IPS (this includes any exceptional arrangements). Cost growth of £0.069m is assumed in quarter 4.

The budget proposal for 2025/26 assumes that any further growth in demand or underlying need is offset by the avoidance of other costs because other solutions are found – training and support solutions for example. The growth in budget for 2025/26 is limited to the projected outturn plus 3% which is proposed as the inflationary increase on IPS ranges. This aligns with the assumptions in the DSG Management Plan.

4.6 ARPs

This year's budget	£1.936m
Projected Outturn	£2.208m
Next year's budget proposal	£2.435m

ARPs are increasingly dealing with more complex needs and this has an impact on higher levels of banding for pupils with an associated increase in cost. Primary ARP places have increased from September 2024 so the budget requirement also assumes the full year impact of the increase.

4.7 Post-16

This year's budget	£1.507m
Projected Outturn	£1.471m
Next year's budget proposal	£1.548m

The projected outturn is within budget as at quarter 3. The budget requirement assumes a 3% increase for Catcote post-16 cost arrangements in line with the DSG Management Plan. An increase in pupils at Hartlepool College of FE is anticipated and estimates are included in the budget proposal.

4.8 Exclusions, including Alternative Provision

This year's budget	£1.192m
Projected Outturn	£1.617m
Next year's budget proposal	£1.617m*

The financial concern surrounding the cost of educating pupils who have been permanently excluded is a standing item on each Forum agenda and is presented in a more detailed report on this same agenda. This budget area requires further discussion, and proposals will be included in the 19 February report to Forum. At this stage, the budget proposal for 2025/26 is shown as £1.617m which is the current projected outturn for 2024/25. This amount will increase.

4.9 Support Services

This year's budget	£0.692m
Projected Outturn	£0.692m
Next year's budget proposal	£0.713m

This budget contributes towards the cost of support services and management. This includes central services such as finance and services funded within education such as Inclusions. An increase of 3% is proposed within the 2025/26 budget to reflect the estimated cost of pay awards.

4.10 Out of Area Placements

This year's budget	£0.452m
Projected Outturn	£0.430m
Next year's budget proposal	£0.442m

Placements have remained relatively stable during 2024/25, with the projected outturn close to the budget estimate. There are 5 leavers expected during 2025/26. The budget requirement assumes 26 places at an average cost of £17k.

4.11 Early Intervention

This year's budget	£0.217m
Projected Outturn	£0.217m
Next year's budget proposal	£0.223m

This budget funds early intervention strategies – the Small Steps service and the Early Year's Portage Offer. An increase of 3% is proposed in the budget for 2025/26 to reflect the estimated cost of pay awards.

4.12 Hearing Impaired / Visually Impaired SLA

This year's budget	£0.205m
Projected Outturn	£0.230m
Next year's budget proposal	£0.251m

This budget funds the cost of the service level agreement to Middlesbrough Borough Council. The SLA cost is expected to be £0.251m in 2025/26.

5. Other Changes Affecting the 2025/26 HNB Budget Requirement

- 5.1 As outlined in the introduction to this report, the provisional budget requirement presented here reflects "business as usual" spending only. It does not reflect any costs to deliver strategic changes. These plans will follow in the report to Forum for the 19 February meeting.
- 5.2 The local authority is developing a five-year capital strategy for SEND. However, allocations are not expected to be published until the end of March and any plans are dependent on the actual funding levels being confirmed.
- 5.3 In addition, the full extent of expected costs for the Exclusions service is not reflected in this report. Further information will follow for discussion at the February Forum.

6. **Recommendations**

6.1 Forum is asked to:

- Review the budget proposals contained in section 4 of this report;
- Note the intended content of a further report to Forum outlined in section 5 of this report.

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 28 January 2025
From Emma Rutherford (Executive Head Teacher- Vulnerable Pupils)

Item 7: Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEXs)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out the current position for Permanent Exclusions (PEXs). The report outlines the impact of the increase of PEXs on the Horizon School and Alternative Provision Budgets and subsequently on the High Needs Block in 2024/25 and beyond.

2. Background

- 2.1 The local authority has a legal duty to provide all pupils who are permanently excluded with a full-time appropriate education from day 6 of the exclusion. This has been provided via the Pupil Referral Unit, The Horizon School, and is funded through a combination of place funding, top up, additional grants and AWPU (Average Weighted Pupil Unit) Clawback.
- 2.2 All PEXs are managed by the Horizon School Executive Head Teacher, with a number of pupils placed in Alternative Provision (AP) where required. AP represents a significantly more costly option than pupils placed in Horizon School.

3. Funding Available

- 3.1 Schools Forum previously agreed a cost model for funding Horizon and Haven based on 28 places within Horizon and 12 places within Haven – a total of 40 places. The current income is based on 40 students across Horizon School, including Haven, along with a budget of £0.053m for AP.
- 3.2 The impact of rising PEX volumes resulted in an overspend of £0.193m for 2023/24 (before use of school reserves). As the service was under review, Schools' Forum agreed additional funding of £0.250m in 2024/25 as a short-term measure.

4. Permanent Exclusions – Current Position

- 4.1 The numbers of permanent exclusions have risen significantly in recent years.

Academic Year	In-Year PEXs	Fair Access / Reintegrated
2020-21	5	2
2021-22	19	6
2022-23	37	8
2023-24	69	2
2024-25*	20	5

*To 23.01.2025

- 4.2 Over the last 4 academic years an average of 4 children have returned to mainstream school following permanent exclusion via Fair Access Protocol.
- 4.3 There are currently **86** students on Horizon/ Haven roll.

- 4.4 The trajectory has been updated given the latest numbers of permanent exclusions. It utilises the current rate of exclusions/ in year less fair access to estimate numbers on roll in future years.

Academic Year		
2024-25	Total on roll at Sept-2024	77
	Return under In year Fair Access	4
	PEX in year	69
2025-26	Estimated Total on roll	142
	Return under In year Fair Access	4
	PEX in year	69
2026-27	Estimated Total on roll	207

- 4.5 Therefore, if current exclusion rates continue there will be **207** pupils on roll of Horizon by September 2026. This does not take into account any rise in the rate of permanent exclusions.

5. Funding Gap – Current Outturn Projection 2024/25

- 5.1 When setting the 2024/25 proposed budget it became clear that the budget model for 2023/24 could not be 'rolled over' into 2024/25. The projected budget shows a shortfall of £0.276m of which £0.151m relates to the Horizon School and £0.125m relates to AP provision. It was hoped that the Horizon School could be on the same cost model capped at 3% as the Special Schools.
- 5.2 The School currently has a similar number of pupils that it did in 2023/24 but the delivery model has significantly changed as the students who have been permanently excluded have an increased level of need, both academically and socially. .
- 5.3 The continued permanent exclusions, a building that is not fit for purpose, the learning needs and social needs of the children and the turnover of staff have all led to instability for the provision leading to the increases in costs.
- 5.4 The estimated Outturn position is currently an overspend of £0.426m. The following factors have contributed to the shortfall is as follows:

Employees

The staffing structure within Horizon has had an impact on the projected outturn for employees. This is due to the considerable needs of the students accessing Horizon and the higher staff ratio required to support the children as a cohort.

Class groups have been reduced to a maximum of 6 students per group all staffed with a teacher and a teaching assistant.

The lack of space within the building for the high number of students has led to pupils having to access AP. All children who are not educated within Horizon full time are now visited to ensure they are safe in their provision. These welfare checks have led to an increased need for pastoral staff to ensure the welfare of these children.

Horizon School requires highly skilled staff due to the complex needs of the children. Recruiting and retaining such staff is difficult. The inability to recruit to posts has led to

the use of expensive supply agency cover which has also had a significant impact on the outturn.

Buildings

The current building is not fit for purpose.

The building is in a state of disrepair and any repairs that have been completed have been costly. There is no outside space which is a necessity for the children who access the provision. There are no breakout spaces available and the needs of the children on roll cannot be met within the current building.

Due to the needs of the children, the size and inappropriate layout of the current building there has been high costs incurred due to 'vandalism'.

Lack of space has led to additional costs through the rental of an additional classroom however this is not adequate to ensure that all the children on roll can be taught within Horizon.

Lack of upgrades on provisions within the school including telephony and wi-fi have led to increased costs in the financial year 2024/25.

Alternative Provision

The current building has capacity for 40 students. With 80 students on roll, coupled with the high level of need and social complexities of the students high levels of alternative provision is required.

Alternative provision is costly with costs ranging from £85 per day to £190 per day.

The costs incurred by Horizon School fluctuate on a regular basis due to the needs of the students, new permanent exclusions and dynamics between the children.

As an indicative cost – the 14 students permanently excluded in the Autumn 2024 term increased costs for alternative provision by £40,200 with the estimated AWPU clawback for these pupils for the academic year being £35,700. As 3 of the exclusions are for Year 7 pupils no AWPU can be clawed back. The average cost of alternative provision for one Year 7 exclusion is £3,906.

Transport

The overspend for transport links to the requirement to utilise alternative provision due to lack of capacity within Horizon School.

Quality alternative provision in Hartlepool is minimal and therefore students are required to be transported out of Hartlepool for their provision.

Equipment

The rise in the number of students has required the increase in equipment, materials and computers.

The Horizon School's computer equipment had not been updated for a significant period and there was not adequate provision for the staff and students. This has not fully been rectified however a number of laptops and other computer equipment has been purchased to support the needs of the students.

School Meals

Nearly all students accessing Horizon School are eligible for free school meals leading to an overspend on the forecast amount.

6. Future Funding Gap - Considerations

- 6.1 As outlined above, the current budget for Horizon and AP does not cover the required provision for the significant increase in permanent exclusions. There is an in-year deficit of £0.425m
- 6.2 Should the trajectory shown at table 4.4 of this report materialise, the current spending pressure could potentially quadruple. Therefore, Schools' Forum is asked to again urgently consider the position and identify solutions to manage the volume of PEXs.
- 6.3 The increase in permanent exclusions, the high level of unassessed needs of the students and the requirement to manage them as one cohort has placed significant pressure on accommodation to meet the needs of the children and young people. Officers are currently reviewing the situation and looking at potential feasibility studies in order to increase accommodation. Alternative accommodation will be required to ensure appropriate education for all permanently excluded students and reduce the need for costly, alternative provision which does not provide an appropriate curriculum to be able to support students back to mainstream education.
- 6.4 Alternative accommodation will require one off capital spend and will come with an increased revenue cost due to the staffing and running costs of a larger education provision.
- 6.5 Schools Forum are engaged with the work underway as part of the High Needs Block review to reduce the High Needs Block deficit. The increase in PEXs and associated pressure on the High Needs Block has the potential to wipe out any savings identified arising from the review, therefore reducing the budget available to support children with special educational needs.
- 6.6 The Local Authority are taking opportunities which, it is hoped, will lead to a reduction in exclusions and thus a reduction in spend. This includes the use of grant funding to create a '3 Tier Alternative Provision' model. Over time it is expected that the impact of this model, through working in close collaboration with schools, will reduce the number of children permanently excluded and therefore reduce the pressure on the High Needs Block.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Forum is asked to:
- Note the contents of the report and acknowledge the significant pressure on Horizon School of increasing PEX volumes
 - Consider ways to limit future PEX volumes.

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 28 January 2025
From Fiona Stobbs (Senior Advisor Inclusive Learning & SEND)
Joanne Harries (Project Manager – SEND and AP Change Programme)

Item 8: Update on DfE SEND and AP Change Programme

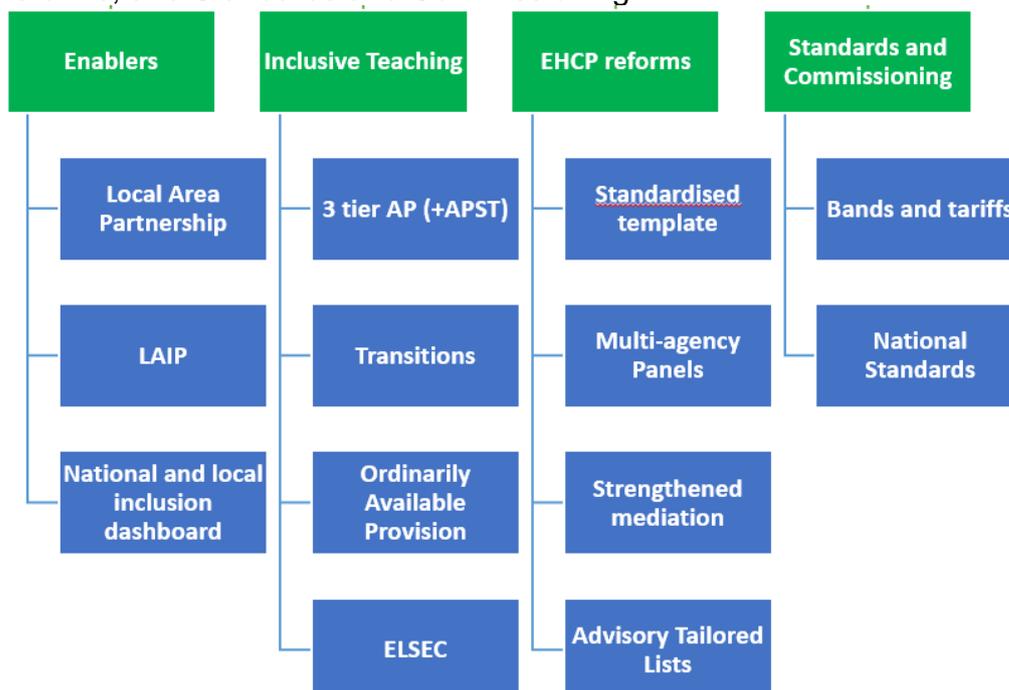
1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update School's Forum on the testing undertaken as part of Phase 1 of the DfE SEND and AP Change Programme and set out the proposals for Phase 2.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2022, the DfE published the findings following a review of the SEND and AP system. Following consultation, the SEND and AP Improvement Plan was developed. 32 local authorities have been asked to test a variety of reforms as part of nine Change Programme Partnerships across the country. Hartlepool Borough Council is the lead authority for the North East Change Programme Partnership which includes Durham, Gateshead and Stockton Councils.

- 2.2 The reforms being tested fit into four areas: Enablers; Inclusive Teaching; EHCP reforms; and Standards and Commissioning.



- 2.3 Over the last year, a significant amount of feedback has been received by the DfE in relation to the reforms being tested and as a result of this specific 'insight guides' are being developed in relation to the LAIP and Partnership, and EHCP reforms areas of testing.
- 2.4 As we move into Phase 2 of the programme there is a change of focus. There are some reforms we are no longer required to test in order to provide feedback and there is a greater focus on testing reforms particularly relating to inclusion.

3. Phase 1 Reforms

3.1 Enablers:

- 3.1.1 Whilst we are no longer required to test anything specific in relation to Local Area Inclusion Plans (LAIPs), in Hartlepool we intend to update the LAIP on an annual basis as we feel that it was a helpful exercise in bringing together a single story about SEND in one place. However, we may remove any sections which we feel are of limited value and focus on those sections which we feel are most useful. The output of our LAIP is the continued development and delivery of the SEND Improvement Plan which we will continue to monitor and review.
- 3.1.2 Although we had an existing multi-agency SEND and AP Partnership, the terms of reference were updated and membership extended in-line with the reform guidance. We intend that the refreshed Hartlepool SEND and AP Partnership will continue to meet to drive forward improvements for children and young people with SEND in Hartlepool.
- 3.1.3 We were asked to provide feedback on the DfE proposal of a SEND dashboard. Feedback has been provided and there is no further action for us to take in relation to the Change Programme, however we are developing a SEND and AP dashboard for Hartlepool to provide the SEND Operational Group and SEND and AP Partnership with relevant data to enable oversight and challenge.

3.2 Inclusive Teaching:

- 3.2.1 We have begun the test of a 3-tier Alternative Provision Model as part of the Change Programme. This has so far focussed on the implementation of an AP Specialist Taskforce (our Hartlepool Inclusion Support Team) working with schools to deliver interventions at Tier 1. From January 25 a Tier 2 offer is available to support the emotional and mental health needs of children which is impacting on their attendance and ability to engage in education (PINES- Pupils in need of educational support). This is an area which will continue to be tested in Phase 2 of the programme and further information is found in the next section of this report.
- 3.2.2 There is nothing specific we have been asked to test in relation to transitions.
- 3.2.3 Our Ordinarily Available Inclusive Mainstream Practice documentation has been developed with schools and other relevant partners and was published in September 2024. Implementation is at different stages in different schools, depending on their context. Some schools have completed full audits of their school against the document, others are addressing the implementation through all-staff performance management, and others have held launch events with all staff. We continue to develop the associated toolkit and will regularly review the document to ensure it meets the needs of all children and young people from early years to post-16.
- 3.2.4 The ELSEC project is funded by money received by both the local authority and the ICB. The team consists of Speech and Language Therapists employed by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust, a Specialist Teacher employed by Speech and Language UK and Speech and Language Assistants employed by the local authority. Since September 2024 the team has been supporting 13 pilot schools and settings, working with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage providing SLCN training for education staff and screening children who have difficulties with their speech, language and communication skills as well as providing interventions and carrying out assessments. From January 2025 they will be accepting referrals from the pilot settings for children requiring a more targeted intervention. ELSEC is expected to form part of the Phase 2 testing.

3.3 EHCP Reforms:

- 3.3.1 We have tested the new EHCP Template for all new assessments issued since April 2024, any moves into area and the majority of reviews issued since July 2024. As at the end of November 2024 82 EHCPs resulting from new assessments, 282 EHCP annual reviews and 22 moves into area have been completed on the new template. Feedback on the new template has been positive, and we plan to continue to use this template for all new assessment and annual reviews. We are keen to develop our quality assurance processes to ensure that the EHCPs are of a high quality. Although not a requirement of the Change Programme testing, we would likely make changes to the advice templates so that they better align with the EHCP template.
- 3.3.2 We already had a multi-agency SEND decision making panel. The remit of this panel has changed slightly as a result of testing this reform and we are developing a follow-up process for when the decision not to assess (or issue) is taken and this will be built into feedback given to schools. No further testing as part of the Change Programme is required.
- 3.3.3 There have been no changes made to our mediation processes as a result of the requirements of the Change Programme. The mediator we use is on the register of approved mediators and the majority of mediations take place within 30 days of the local authority receiving the notification of the request for mediation. No further testing as part of the Change Programme is required.
- 3.3.4 We had concerns that there would be some unintended (negative) consequences of providing families with advisory tailored lists, listing schools which could meet their child's needs, particularly as a small borough bordering a number of other local authorities. No further testing as part of the Change Programme is required. We are re-developing the Local Offer and will use this as a mechanism to ensure that relevant information is available in a clear and accessible format.

3.4 Standards and Commissioning:

- 3.4.1 We were asked to provide our bands and tariffs documentation and assess a range of case studies against these. We have provided this. There have been no specific testing requirements in relation to this.
- 3.4.2 There has not been anything specific for us to test in relation to national standards.

3.5 Finance

- 3.5.1 As the lead local authority in the North East CPP, Hartlepool received all the funding for the Change Programme across the North East and are required to distribute it to the other three local authorities. Each local authority submits bids for funding to test the various areas of the reforms and is required to submit a monthly return to the DfE which sets out actual spend to date and projected spend to the end of the Change Programme. From the overall funding received we have been allocated £1,277,434.38.
- 3.5.2 An element of the funding received is specifically to support the ELSEC project and an equivalent amount is received by the ICB. Figures in this report relate just to the amount received by the Hartlepool Borough Council, £503,306.23.
- 3.5.3 The table below sets out the actual and projected spend on various elements of the programme across the four local authorities who make up the Change Programme Partnership. As the lead authority we have also incurred some regional costs.

	23/24	24/25 to Dec 24	24/25 Jan - March 25	April 25-Dec 25 (March 26 for AP/ELSEC)	Total- spend & Proj
ELSEC - Total	£ -	£ 107,404.15	£ 74,063.75	£ 296,105.33	£ 477,573.23
<i>Regional costs</i>	£ -	£ 1,641.00	£ 519.30	£ 5,687.80	£ 7,848.10
Programme costs	£31,969.62	£ 98,332.67	£ 31,364.66	£ 78,549.00	£ 240,215.95
EHCP reforms	£ -	£ 99,001.64	£ 39,025.23	£ 141,075.69	£ 279,102.56
OAP	£ 6,150.00	£ 529.00	£ 336.00	£ 129.00	£ 994.00
AP	£ -	£ 181,455.45	£ 110,353.26	£ 451,241.45	£ 749,200.16
Change Programme - Total	£38,119.62	£ 380,959.76	£ 181,598.45	£ 676,682.94	£ 1,277,360.77

3.5.4 In terms of ELSEC there is currently £25.7k unallocated. Discussions are taking place with the ICB and the ELSEC Oversight Group to understand the full amount of any projected underspend across both organisations. The difference between the allocation and the projected spend for the rest of the Change Programme is just £74.

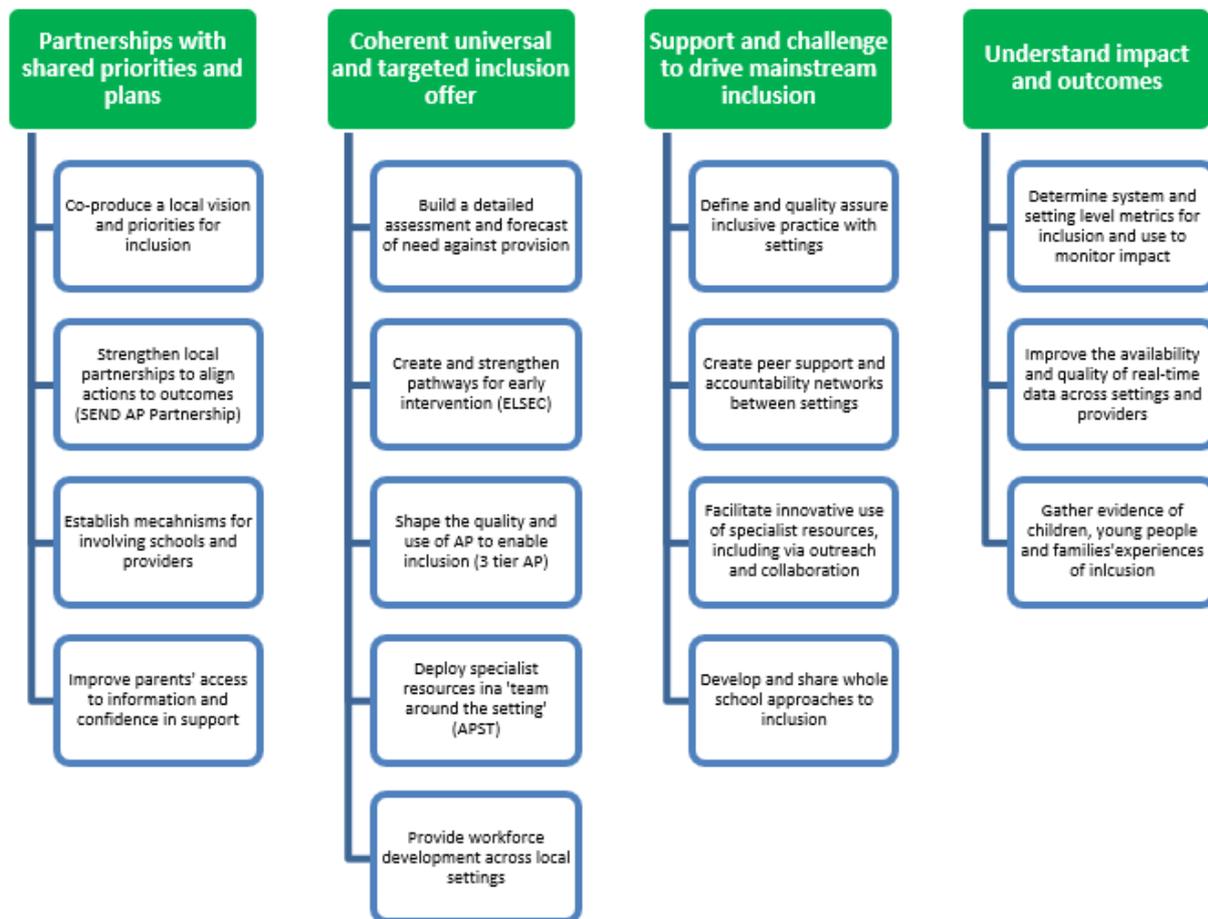
3.5.5 There is currently £545k left in the overall pot for the Change Programme which has not been allocated to any of the four local authorities and we are each currently developing bids for a share of this money. Given the direction of the Change Programme, the intention of the Hartlepool bid is to increase capacity in the Inclusion Service. Further information in relation to Phase 2 is provided in the next section of the report.

4. Phase 2 Reforms

4.1 From January 2025 we are entering Phase 2 of the Change Programme and the focus is very much on inclusion. There are four areas of focus to guide the testing activity in relation to enabling inclusion. These are:

- Local Partnerships with shared priorities and plans for commissioning / delivering the right provision to support inclusion.
- A coherent inclusion offer of universal and targeted services wrapped around mainstream settings.
- Support and challenge to mainstream settings to drive inclusive practice and leadership.
- Use of data and evidence to understand impact on outcomes and experiences for children and young people, cohorts and settings.

4.2 Supporting each of these areas of focus are building blocks:



There is also the scope for testing local initiatives which support mainstream inclusion (links with Phase 1 testing are noted in brackets).

- 4.3 There is already a significant amount of work going on across Hartlepool in relation to inclusion and the building blocks to be tested and as part of Phase 2 we are required to develop a local delivery plan which sets out the key actions and activities in relation to each area.
- 4.4 We feel that the continued development of the Hartlepool Inclusion Team (including 3-tier AP and APST) is key to developing the offer, providing relevant support and challenge and improving the experiences of children and young people. We are keen to work with schools to develop this model and consider its sustainability beyond the DfE Change Programme.
- 4.5 It is our intention to make a bid from the remaining Change Programme allocation to employ two Senior Specialist Teachers to support the work across mainstream inclusive provision. The intention would be for the team to drive a workforce development programme across Hartlepool to support schools and settings in embedding the work of the Ordinarily Available Inclusive Mainstream Provision.
- 4.6 If there is an extension to the Change Programme and associated additional funding then we propose to extend the contracts of the Inclusion team.

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Schools' Forum are asked to note the contents of the report.