



Date: 29th March 2023

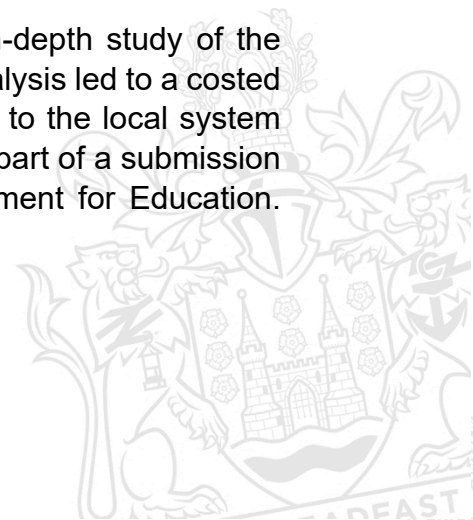
To: The Mayor and members of Cabinet

Report Title: Delivering Better Value in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Grant

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Lani-Mae Ball Councillor Rachel Blake	All	Yes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy has been devised by a full range of stakeholders and aims to improve local systems for children and young people aged 0-25.
2. The SEND Strategy was approved by Cabinet in November 2022, with delivery beginning in January 2023. Consultation with the wider system took place during September- November 2022.
3. The previous Cabinet report set out the local and national challenges around high needs funding and how Doncaster will aim to re-shape the local system so that young people can have their needs met earlier, thereby ensuring stronger efficiencies in local high needs spending.
4. Doncaster has volunteered to be part of a DfE (Department for Education) project called 'Delivering Better Value in SEND' which seeks to understand the key drivers behind local high needs spending and then bid for financial support to local authorities in order to plan changes that will relieve pressure in the longer term.
5. Through this project, Doncaster has participated in an in-depth study of the patterns and trends within our high needs system. This analysis led to a costed implementation plan which will enable long term changes to the local system which produce greater efficiencies. This plan then formed part of a submission for a grant award of £1 million pounds from the Department for Education.



These funds will support the delivery of our SEND strategy, as we deliver changes to the SEND system in Doncaster.

6. The DfE have now approved our grant application and will release the above sum by March 31st, which will enable us to proceed with our planned work.
7. The service is keen to accept this grant as quickly as possible in order to allow us to expedite delivery of the plan over the coming months.

EXEMPT REPORT

8. This is not an exempt report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. To accept this grant award of £1 million subject to the terms and conditions of the grant and delegate further decision making regarding spend, in line with our agreed implementation plan and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant to the Director of Children, Young People and Families, in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Education, Skills and Young People.

REASON FOR URGENCY:

10. This grant has recently been awarded, but funds will need to be released this financial year. As this award has been made very recently, we have been unable to provide the usual 28 days notice on the Forward Plan, therefore this decision is being taken in accordance with Access to Information Rule 15 General Exception provisions. If we are to ensure that we can deliver our actions as per the agreed plan it is important that we can accept the grant award so that we can ensure the timely delivery of the SEND implementation plan.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

11. The 'Delivering Better Value' plan and grant will enable us to deliver a stronger range of provisions and interventions to ensure that children and young people with special needs and disabilities are happy and successful in their lives. It will also aim to ensure a much stronger landscape of training and employment activities.
12. The plan will improve workforce knowledge and resilience and enable us to recruit and retain workers in key roles, working with children.
13. Our work will enhance co-production both with our partners but importantly with children, young people and their families, ensuring lived experience and local intelligence influences the decisions we make. The grant will help us to deliver changes that our families are keen to see in the local system.
14. Through this plan we will invest in local provision and services and enable a more sustainable delivery model.

BACKGROUND

15. In 2018/19 councils faced a High Needs funding gap of almost £500 million, by 2019/20 this was £806million and £1.2 billion by 2020/21, with a forecast for this to be over £3 billion by the end of 2022/23 (Local Government Association). The DfE have continued to work with local authorities to try and identify ways of managing or controlling local deficits through the 'Safety Valve' and 'Delivering Better Value' projects.
16. In Doncaster we have seen significant challenges in our high needs system. The number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have increased from 1898 in 2019 to 2489, a 31% increase. In the year 2016/17 there were 238 referrals for statutory assessment and in 2022 this had increased to 600 for the year in total. This has created pressure on schools and council teams as we try to ensure that plans are delivered in a timely and impactful way.
17. This surge in need has led to an increase in the number of young people educated outside of the borough in Independent Special schools. Currently 161 young people with EHCPs are educated in out of area provision for their Post 16 education. This has increased from 111 in 2019. Similarly, 199 children and young people who are under 16, are educated in out of area provision. This has grown from just 70 in 2019.

'Delivering Better Value in SEND' in Doncaster:

18. The DfE 'Delivering Better Value in SEND' project began in October 2022. This supports local areas to analyse trends in their local areas and supports the production of an implementation plan and a grant for each of the 55 L.A.s involved. The DfE will also collect overarching themes from this research to inform national policy.
19. Doncaster volunteered to take part in this programme and began this work in October. We have undertaken a 'deep dive' into the local data, trends and projections around the local SEND system alongside working with a range of partners and stakeholders. The key findings of this analysis were:
 - High needs block trajectory is projected to increase in the coming years, unless action is taken to mitigate the costs of independent special school placements.
 - Recent reduction in the proportion of young people with EHCPs educated in mainstream and increase in pre-16 out of area placements.
 - Recent shift in proportion of young people moving out of mainstream via EHCP process, particularly at transition points.
 - One key factor driving spend is parental confidence in mainstream settings, especially at transition points, and particularly at secondary.
 - Support services vary in operating practices and do not always get involved early enough to prevent young people requiring expensive provision later.

20. The 'Delivering Better Value' project findings corresponded clearly to the priorities within our SEND Strategy'. They set out key actions required now to improve the system. These are included within the implementation plan and fall into 3 main categories:

- Improve local processes
- Develop mainstream culture and practice.
- Workforce transformation.

21. The specific areas identified to lead improvements include:

- A need for stronger advice and guidance for schools so that they are more equipped to meet need at an early point.
- Improvement EHCP processes and quality assurance of plans.
- Developing a funding model that will enable schools to meet need without needing an EHCP.
- A clear sufficiency plan that outlines how future specialist provision will meet emerging needs.
- Ensuring that specialist services are more coherent and intervene at the correct point.
- Further developing workforce skills and understanding across a range of stakeholders in order to ensure that children, young people and families get support at the correct point.

22. The implementation plan sets out the steps needed to do this, including:

- Developing:
 - A multi-agency handbook, toolkit and professional development framework to support practitioners in managing young people's needs.
 - A new assessment framework and funding model, to support schools in making effective provision at the right time.
 - A sufficiency strategy that outlines the future of specialist provision in the borough.
 - An online tool for Education, Health and Care Plans so that processes are more efficient and easily accessed by parents and professionals.
- Improving the operating model for support services.
- Establishing a mainstream inclusivity team who to increase accountability and direct support and guidance for schools.
- Ensuring an effective single data point for all SEND information and improve the Local Offer site so that it is more accessible for parents, children and young people.
- Setting out our local parent and young people co-production arrangements through a local charter.

23. In order to make these changes, we have developed a costed implementation plan, supported by a grant application for £1m to show how we are going to make these changes. This application has been supported by the DfE and has been successful, with work beginning on the related actions in April 2023. In

order to follow this plan through, we are keen to accept this grant and begin the delivery of this work.



OPTIONS CONSIDERED






24. To accept the 'Delivering Better Value' grant or to not accept the 'Delivering Better Value' grant.


REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

25. Accepting the grant will allow Doncaster to rapidly develop its local system for meeting the needs of children and young people. This award will enable us to improve practice amongst professionals and improve the experience and outcomes of our young people. Not accepting the award will significantly slow down the delivery of our plan and will lead to growing costs and will adversely impair outcomes for our children and young people.

26. IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
 Tackling Climate Change	✓			
Comments: Improving the range of local Special Needs provision will ensure that less young people will have to travel out of borough for school. This will, in turn, limit the amount of transport that is provided by the council, thereby limiting ecological impacts.				
 Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work	✓			
Comments: The work planned through this grant will ensure that educational provision is more effective in developing the skills of our children and young people. It will also create a new landscape of employment and training for young people when they leave school.				

 <p>Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs</p>	✓			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Using this grant, we will work with training providers and employers to ensure that young people with special needs or disabilities are able to access meaningful and successful employment in later life.</p>				
 <p>Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all</p>	✓			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The planned work undertaken through our implementation plan will improve joint planning and commissioning arrangements in order to ensure that health provision is timely and appropriate for children and young people.</p>				
 <p>Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs</p>				✓
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Not directly relevant</p>				
 <p>Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough</p>	✓			
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The application of this grant will support schools to deliver improved practices to work with families to meet the needs of young people at an earlier point. We will focus on a joined up, family- focused approach and seek to ensure that services are delivered so that the needs of our children are met earlier and more effectively by all services.</p>				
 <p>Building Transport and digital</p>				✓

connections fit for the future				
Comments: Not directly relevant				
 Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities	✓			
Comments: Not directly relevant				
Fair & Inclusive	✓			
Comments: Fairness and inclusivity underpin the core principles of our implementation plan. Young people have a right to a high quality education and to employment, regardless of their needs. This strategy aims to build the skills and awareness across Doncaster that will deliver enhanced inclusion so that young people with special needs or disabilities can access education, close to home, with their peers.				

27. Legal Implications [Officer Initials: NC, Date: 14/3/23]

28. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence to do anything that individuals may generally do. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council the power to purchase goods and services.

29. The Council must comply with all laws and regulatory requirements when delivering the scheme (including, without limitation compliance with all laws and regulatory requirements relating to public procurement and subsidies) when administering the funding. Failure to comply with such terms may lead to claw back. The Legal department will work with the report author to ensure the Council understands these obligations.

30. As set out in the report, there is a requirement to accept this additional funding by the end of the financial year. This means that it would not be practical to provide the 28 days' notice normally required for a key decision. This decision is therefore being taken in accordance with the Council's Access to Information Rule 15 General Exception Provisions.

31. The 'Delivering Better Value' plan and grant will assist the Authority in meeting its various legal duties regarding children with special educational needs. It has a duty to identify and assess the special educational needs of children and young people for whom they are responsible. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, the Authority must consider how the child or young person can be supported to facilitate their development and to help them achieve their educational and other outcomes. The statutory guidance 'SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years' provides further details on the duties.
32. If a child or young person needs, or may need, more support than their school or other setting can give them, then the Authority must carry out an Education, Health and Care needs assessment, which may lead to an Education, Health and Care plan being produced for them.
33. The Authority must publish a Local Offer containing information about all the services and support it expects to be available for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities for whom they are responsible.

34. Financial Implications [Officer Initials: SB | Date: 15/03/2023]

35. Doncaster Council has been successful in a £1m grant application to the Department for Education's (DfE) Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme and as such sufficient budget exists for this decision.
36. The grant funding is expected to be paid by the DfE in March 2023 with expenditure estimated to start in April 23. The grant terms and conditions for this grant are still awaited.
37. The aim of the this grant programme is to help local authorities provide effective SEND services, provide affordable SEND provisions and achieve a sustainable in-year financial position against the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block.
38. This grant in line with the approved application is to be spent against the headings below across the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years with the spend areas listed still to be developed and confirmed in line with the grant terms and conditions.

Workstream & Area	Description	Total Financial Cost	Spend 2023/24 (Financial Year)	Spend 2024/25 (Financial Year)
Mainstream Process	To ensure that mainstream schools are optimised to support CYP by defining the mainstream offer, improving processes (£35k for writing and £10k for training) and ensuring that SEND Funding is targeted at the earliest point (£40k). SENCo support & EHCP digital tool (£98k)	£ 183,000	£ 147,000	£36,000
Mainstream Culture & Practice	To develop more inclusive mainstream cultures through the re-shaping of specialist support services (£10k), the introduction of a Mainstream Inclusivity Team (£480k - £240k per	£ 532,000	£ 286,000	£ 246,000

	year for 2 years) which will oversee and develop standards of inclusion and parental relationships (£20k) across the borough. Appoint 48 SEND Data lead for 5 days per month over 2 years (£12k)			
Workforce Transformation	To deliver workforce training to ensure that the graduated approach is followed accurately and to improve the capacity of front line services to deliver inclusive services. Appoint workforce development team to deliver awareness and specialist training (£250k over two years plus £5k for SENCO conference and training) and development worker to ensure that Local Offer is accurate, accessible and promoted to parents (£30k)	£ 285,000	£ 160,000	£ 125,000
	TOTAL	£ 1.00 M	£ 593,000	£ 407,000

39. The Dedicated School Grant High Needs Block funding is currently forecast to overspend in 2022-23 by £7.6m to bring the overall overspend position to £21.2m when added to existing deficits. The overall High Needs Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) currently forecasts an overspend position of £32.2m by 2025-26 (as set out in the table below).

Description	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
DSG High Needs Grant (after deductions)	41,173	47,761	49,422	51,131
Expenditure	48,758	51,198	53,560	55,179
In Year Variance	7,585	3,437	4,138	4,047
Overall DSG Balance	21,211	24,648	28,786	32,833

40. The data modelling produced by Newton's Europe and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in collaboration with the DfE indicates that cumulative savings over 5 years are between £4.2m and £9.6m. This is dependent upon the confidence level attributed to the tasks with a potential of £15.5m cumulative savings overall. These figures were on the general basis of lower demand being created within the system and therefore fewer placements made in out of area placements.

41. Further work will be needed to model where further savings may be generated against specific lines of the High Needs Block and to factor those into future years projection for the High Needs DSG to revise the table above. The grant work and outcomes achieved will be reviewed and monitored as the plans progress.

42. Human Resources Implications [Officer Initials: JC | Date: 14/03/2023]

There are no direct HR implications associated with this report.

43. Technology Implications [Officer Initials: NR | Date: 14/03/2023]

44. There are no specific technology implications relating to this report. However, early engagement with Digital and ICT will be needed in relation to any arising technology requirements to support the delivery of the implementation plan.
45. In relation to point 23 of the plan 'to develop an online tool for Education, Health and Care Plans', Digital and ICT will need to be involved in all aspects of any such development to maintain understanding of the various requirements and options that may emerge. Where possible, Digital and ICT will prefer to use existing technology. If this is not possible, Digital and ICT would need the opportunity to be able to evaluate the security, functionality and feasibility of any potential new technical solutions.

46. RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

47. **Risk:** Not delivering our priorities in a timely fashion and in line with agreed spending and implementation plan.
48. **Mitigation:** We are mitigating this by requesting acceptance of this grant and also having robust governance arrangements around the delivery of our SEND Strategy and implementation plan, with overall oversight to the Education and Skills Portfolio Board and operational oversight a the Local Area Send Partnership Board as it's a partnership action. We are held to account by the Regional and National DfE SEND team to ensure that the programme is delivered in accordance with our plan.

CONSULTATION

49. The SEND Strategy was devised with a range of partners and consulted upon during autumn 2022. There was clear support and no objections to the priorities above. Further suggestions offered by the system have been incorporated into the Implementation Plan. The grant submission was predicated upon the findings of this consultation, and particularly the experiences of our children, young people and families.

50.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

November 2022: Cabinet report. Doncaster SEND Strategy:

<https://doncaster.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s39633/CYP%20OS%20SEND%20Final%20Update%20160323.pdf>

[High needs budgets: effective management in local authorities](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/108888/high-needs-budgets-effective-management-in-local-authorities.pdf)
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Doncaster SEND Implementation Plan](#)

51.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

Social emotional and mental health (SEMH)

Department for Education (DFE)

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)

Medium Term Financial Plan (MFTP)

Mental Health Support Teams (MHST)

General Developmental Assessment (GDA)

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

52.

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