

SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING – 6TH JULY 2022

DfE - Delivering Better Value / Deficit Management Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview to School Forum members of the DfE Delivering Better Value Programme (DBV) and the Deficit Management Plan.

DfE Delivering Better Value Programme

On the 23rd May the Council was advised that it had been accepted on to the DfE Delivering Better Value Programme and had had been placed in Tranche 1.

The purpose of the programme is to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and secure the sustainability of your SEND services through joint working with DfE colleagues.

The programme for the Tranche 1 Council's will commence shortly and part of the criteria for selection was those Authority's showing a deficit balance on their DSG Account.

The aim of the programme is to relieve some of the pressure in the system (in the short-term, before the more comprehensive and systemic SEND Review reforms are enacted) by supporting LAs to provide high quality SEND services that work and are sustainable and affordable, so they are better-placed to meaningfully implement the recommendations of SEND review when they come into place.

The programme will result in the creation of an action plan. The plan created as part of DBV will be LA specific and needs to work for the area. The action plan should be credible and cover a timeframe where what is being proposed is capable of being achieved.

While there will be no monitoring or recoverable costs imposed on participating authorities, DfE will evaluate the impact on selected outcome indicators from publicly available data as well as impact on DSG outturns of participating authorities.

It must be noted that addressing historic deficits is not the key purpose of the DBV programme, and there is no funding for this in the DBV Programme, but to support LAs to return to in-year balance whilst delivering high-quality services. Efficiencies that flow from this may allow LAs to release funds to address historic deficits. This may not happen for all LAs though, and a number of LAs that are part of the DBV programme may be invited to join the Safety Valve (SV) programme next financial year due to the scale of their deficit. As are welcome to include initiatives in their action plans that help reduce their historic deficit.

The DBV programme is different to the SV programme in that there will be no contractual agreement in place with intense monitoring, no withholding of funding and no clawback mechanisms. The DBV programme is about support, not intervention, to help LAs get to where they want to be. The action plan will also not be scored by DfE. LAs will agree their plan with support from the delivery partner, SEND and Finance Professional Advisers with buy-in from their stakeholders. DfE will agree with each LA which elements of the action plan will be funded, and it's then the LA's responsibility to implement this.

There is £85 million funding available for DBV. The funding will not be distributed on a formulaic basis, nor on a first come first served basis. The intention is that LAs will not need to bid for funding and compete against other LAs on the programme. Each LA's funding allocation will be determined by the action plan produced during the diagnostic phase up to an upper limit. Depending on the action plans, some LAs will get more and some will get less.

The funding for LAs for the activities detailed in their action plans is for revenue only, whilst there may be capital implications additional capital allocations process are being made available so LAs may want to consider this when producing their action plans.

Once distributed the funds will be LA owned with no clawback or requirement for match funding.

DSG Deficit Management Plan

A key component of the of the programme is producing a quality realistic action plan which has achievable goals and outcome. This inevitably requires the collation of both historic and projected trends in a number of areas so demand and cost can be identified.

To this end the DfE have produced a recommended template for completion which acts as a repository for both quantitative and qualitative data from which conclusion should be able to be drawn and an action plan pulled together.

The spreadsheet is a workbook of 19 tabs which requests information, both historic and projected in several areas.

To summarise data per type of specialist provision by number of Education Health and Social Care Plans (EHCP's) split by age and financial data predominantly using the S251 data returns from 2018 but with projections to 2026 is required along with narrative around reasons for movements, trends, risks and assumptions, mitigations and stakeholder involvement are required.

Whilst this data is crucial, the key part is the recording of the workstreams actions required to work towards meeting the objectives of the programme. This requires sign off by all parties to be recorded.

Work so far

Officers have begun completing the template in terms of the non-qualitative and financial data both historical and projections and following this the interpretation and analysis can take place which will feed into the completion of the more narrative parts.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Schools Forum note the above.
- That the Schools Forum High Needs Working Party continue to meet and are updated on the document, and
- This item is discussed more fully at the School's Forum meeting in September

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6th July 2022