

- AGENDA



SCHOOLS FORUM

Date: Thursday 16th January 2025
Time: 4.30pm
Place: Winterbourne Academy, 17 High Street,
Winterbourne, Bristol BS36 1JL

Distribution

Members of the Committee

Pippa Osborne (Chair)	Dave Baker (Vice Chair)
Julia Anwar	Ross Newman
Dave Farr	Diane Owen
Tania Craig	Elly Owen
Nicky Edwards	Will Roberts
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Florence Hiatt	Bernice Webber
Aaron Jefferies	David Williams
David Jenkins	Sue Wright
Nicola Jones	
Jonathan Keohane	
Ruth Laing	
Louise Leader	

Appropriate Officers attending:

Mustafa Salih
Hilary Smith
Caroline Warren

Councillors attending:

Ian Boulton

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AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Pippa Osborne)
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Pippa Osborne)
4. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT (Pippa Osborne)
5. MINUTES FROM 5th DECEMBER 2024 MEETING (Pippa Osborne)
6. EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2024 – 2025 REPORT (Jo Briscoombe)
7. Q2 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2024 - 2025 Report (Caroline Warren)
8. SPECIAL SCHOOLS FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS SLIDES (Mustafa Salih)
9. SCHOOL BUDGET UPDATE 2025 – 2026 (Verbal Update) (Mustafa Salih)
10. CURRENT LA PLANS FOR COMMISSIONED SPECIALIST PLACES 2025 - 2026 AND FUTURE YEARS (Hilary Smith)
11. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN
12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**South Gloucestershire Schools Forum
Minutes of Meeting held on
Thursday 05th December 2024
Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT:**Forum Members:**

Pippa Osborne (Chair)	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Dave Baker (Deputy Chair)	CEO, Olympus Academy Trust
Tania Craig	Executive Head Teacher, New Horizons Learning Centre
Nicky Edwards	Early Years representative
Paul Evry	Chief Finance Officer, Mosaic Partnership
Kim Garland	Headteacher, Brimsham Green Secondary School
Flo Hiatt	Head of Additional Learning Support, SGSC
David Jenkins	Governor, Crossways Schools
Nicola Jones	Representative Special Academies
Ruth Laing	Head of Early Years and Community, The Leaf Trust
Louise Leader	Headteacher, Pathways Learning Centre
Ross Newman	CEO of the Leaf Trust representing Academies
Diane Owen	Chair to Academy Council at King's Oak Academy
Elly Owen	District and Branch Secretary – South Gloucestershire NEU
Will Roberts	Chief Executive, CSET
Fr. Malcolm Strange	Bristol Diocese
Susie Weaver	Executive Director, Cabot Learning Federation
Bernice Webber	Headteacher, Old Sodbury Primary School
David Williams	Diocese of Gloucester
Sue Wright	Finance Director CSET

Executive Councillors:

Ian Boulton, Cabinet Member - Schools, Skills, Employment and Business

Officers:

Mustafa Salih, Service Director Resources and Business
Hilary Smith, Service Director, Education, Learning and Skills
Caroline Warren, Finance Business Partner
Deb Luter, Senior Accountant - People (Children)
Michelle Palmer, Accountant – People (Children)
Claire Paines, Schools Finance Officer

Others: Tamsin Moreton, Director of Finance & Operations, Enable Trust

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chris Sivers, Andy Watson, Julia Anwar, Aaron Jefferies, Dave Farr, Jonathan Keohane

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None

2. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT

- This is to officially appoint and welcome Elly Owen as Trade Union rep. Mustafa Salih wrote out to all the Trade Unions and the responses have been positive for Elly to be appointed as the Schools Forum rep for the Trade Unions.
- At the last meeting it was reported that there would be a meeting offline around PLC and Pippa confirmed that that has happened.

3. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING – 14th November 2024

Additional comments to be added.

LL - Can we be certain that the changes being proposed for PLC will synchronise timewise with changes to expanded RB provision? I fear there could be a mismatch in timescales.

EL - I think an Impact Assessment would reassure me.

SW- Hilary - on this and other points - including this place planning suggestion from Pippa - could you/team come to HNWG with info available next week - thanks.

SW – The next HNWG meeting will go into more detail of the terms of reference and best value for money to meeting the children’s needs and also note the expressions of interest for schools.

TC - QA of options is key to success. A school who wants to do this to protect funding due to falling rolls for example may not have the skill set to run a SEMH provision and that would be a setup to fail model.

EO - I am concerned that there is still little consideration of possible redundancies as a result of these reductions.

LL - I am concerned that there is still little consideration of possible redundancies as a result of these reductions. I will be picking this up through HNWG Elly. The impact assessment will also help address this point.

KG - Will the cost of meeting students' SEMH needs via expanded RB provision be less than PLC provision? Presumably it is anticipated that the answer is yes, and that this is why it is being pursued. Will we ensure that expanded non-PLC provision will be on stream, and functioning before PLC reduction in places has happened. Can that happen in 2024-2025?

It's also important that we are comparing like with like in terms of the level of needs and costs. There are some lower need SEMH needs, that could be supported in RB's at a lower cost, but I am confident that RB's would be unlikely to be able to support the high level of need of most CYP attending PLC.

Action: It was agreed to explore an Impact Assessment as a matter of urgency through the HNWG.

Remainder of the Minutes approved and recorded as a true record.

4. Update on Schools Budgets – For Information (Deb Luter)

Deb shared the report. The purpose of the report is to report on the Schools' financial position compared to the previous years and highlights the pressures schools are facing and the support the Council has in place supporting schools with financial challenges.

A strategic group meets regularly consisting of representatives from various departments within the Council to look at schools with financial challenges and what we can do to support those schools.

We have access to the DfE's Schools Resources Management Advisers and are able to ask them to support a couple of our schools and they will go into those schools and do a health check on their finances and produce a report and then we can work with those schools.

The school funding settlement for this year 2024-25 was a particularly challenging one with a lower increase in both the schools and the high needs budgets than for a number of years.

PO – The figures in the report are for maintained schools and most of the MATs would be happy to share their budget figures.

Action: Caroline Warren and Mustafa Salih to contact the MATs and get that information.

5. Phased Implementation of new Banding and Top Up Arrangement for Mainstream Schools – For Consultation (Caroline Warren)

Caroline shared the report.

The purpose of the report is to update the Forum on the move to the third year of the SEND Top-Up and Banding Arrangements. In February 2022 the Council through Cabinet and Full Council approved the implementation of new banding and Top-Up Funding arrangements with specific transitional protection to apply over academic years 2022/23 to 2024/25.

The recommendation is that the Council will be moving to the planned third year of phased transitional protection for EHCP Top-Up rates.

The Council's previous system was very complex so we undertook a review and introduced a new top up system. We previously presented that South Gloucestershire Council was on average spending a lot more on top up funding than the England average, our statistical neighbours and the South West.

39 EHCPs from a representative sample of schools and bandings were reviewed in this way. The review team included Schools Representatives, Educational Psychologists, EHCP Team representatives and finance representatives. This work took place over several months and each EHCP was reviewed at a very detailed level.

When the new banding and top-Up rates were introduced, the Council agreed to undertake this annual review before the next phase of reduced protection occurred. The protection is due to finish on 31st August 2025 and this exercise will be repeated next year and the results reported to the Forum before protection is fully removed.

Original plans were to move to the new reduced protection rates in September 2024, however as this case study review took longer than anticipated schools have continued to be funded at the previous rates and this will continue up to the end of December 2024, with the change now taking place from 1 January 2025.

Action: To understand how many of the older Ready Reckoner EHCPs there are and how they are distributed across schools to unpick that and bring back to a future meeting.

6. Schools Budgets 2025-2026 including options for a block transfer – For Formal Consultation (Mustafa Salih)

This is a formal consultation with the Schools Forum of the size of the transfer and we are asking to consider a transfer of £3m. We will need to report the Forum's views to the Secretary of State as part of our Safety Valve work and report the Forum's views to Cabinet in February to make a final decision.

The DfE has announced some of the funding arrangements for 2025-26 but has not yet announced the final DSG funding values for LAs. This report focuses on Mainstream school funding; Special Schools and Early Years sector will be provided with funding information after the DSG rates are announced in December and these formulae rates will be brought to the January Schools Forum meeting.

The National Funding Formula (NFF) rates are usually published by the DfE in July but they only came out on Thursday last week and in addition they have not yet released the APT tool to run the formula which made our job even more difficult. We had to re-create the formula to come up with the figures and am grateful for Caroline Warren and her team who worked hard on these figures and getting it out was not a small task.

The case for an increased block transfer of £3m stems from the fact that the current Safety Valve targets agreed with the DfE are not being met. There is evidence of

progress for example SG is now at the England average for the proportion of EHCPs having moved from having a higher proportion of EHCPs than the England average. We are still awaiting a significant amount of Safety Valve funding and we are aware that other LAs that have missed their targets have had their funding stopped. That is why it is important to increase the block transfer around this time.

The transfers shown in this report are:

- **A 3m transfer:** this is based on maintaining the proportion of the aggregate school's budget shares that the first £2.2m represented. i.e. £2.2m represented 1.352% of school budget shares in 2020/21 and £3m represents 1.352% of 2025/26 school budget shares. *Preferred option.*
- **A 2.6m transfer:** this was trailed at the last Forum meeting and represents what the original £2.2m would be using standard inflationary uplifts. Wanted to make sure that option as well, increase on the 2.2m by inflationary uplifts.
- **A 2.2m transfer:** this has been the standard transfer undertaken each year over recent years.
- **A £1m transfer** this is the highest transfer possible without requiring Secretary of State approval.

The current proposed transfer of £3m, the majority of which still flows back to schools but importantly to specifically support SEND pupils, would allow the following investments:

- **£1m** for Cluster Boards to invest in SEND support in their schools;
- **£250k** for investment in Early Years;
- **£970k** to invest in early help and support schools to meet more complex needs of SEND pupils;
- **£780k** investment in central capacity.

One factor that seems to be contributing to financial challenges for a large number of schools is size and related to low pupil numbers/declining pupil numbers. With a decline in birth rates over recent years a number of smaller schools are facing difficult pupil number challenges that go beyond school performance and popularity.

Officers are therefore recommending an increase in the lump sum to the primary schools as the best mechanism to shift some funding to smaller schools to meet those financial challenges.

Recommendations:

The Schools Forum is requested to approve:

Option 1: a £3m transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, which represents the same impact on school funding as the original £2.2m did and supports key areas of support for SEND pupils, as well as changing the lump sum values to support

smaller schools. **The Council recommends the transfer of £3m due to the importance of the Safety Valve plan.**

The Council will need to consider the views expressed by the Forum, when setting the final Schools Budget including the proposal to transfer £3m, however the decision does lie with the Council. The Council will also need to obtain the Secretary of State for Education's approval for the £3m transfer and with that regard it is also important to point out that the proposal to seek a bigger transfer was put forward by DfE Safety Valve colleagues as part of our monitoring meetings regarding the Safety Valve plan.

DfE colleagues have said that other LAs have increased the schools block transfer to try and stay on target and they have asked us to consider doing that as well.

Action: It was agreed that the questions regarding how the cluster money is being spent and also assessing the impact of the spends would be picked up on the next HNWG agenda.

There were three votes in total:

1. Do we agree with the uplift to the lump sum amount (assuming no small secondaries are negatively impacted) – **Yes**
2. Do we agree to maintain the £2.2m or higher transfer - **Yes**
3. Do we agree to a higher transfer e.g. £2.6m or £3m - **No**

PO - It was felt that with so much pressure on schools budgets and the increasing deficit and increasing need within SEND, Forum members could not support the larger amount. Also, the LA have the ability to still request a higher amount if they deem it the right decision.

Action: The Forum unanimously approved a transfer of £2.2m (but no higher) and approved the proposed increase to the primary lump sum.

7. Any Other Business

None

Meeting closed

South Gloucestershire Council

SCHOOLS FORUM (For Formal Consultation with the Forum)

18 January 2025

CONSULTATION ON EARLY YEARS FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2025/2026

Purpose of Report

1. To share the outcomes of the recent consultation with the early years (EY) sector on the proposals for the Early Years Funding Formula for 2025/2026. To gain feedback from Schools Forum for the model of funding allocation for early years and support for the continued additional SEND funding allocated to early years projects by Schools Forum.

Policy

2. In line with government requirements, South Gloucestershire Council must consult on any proposed changes to the funding formula for under 2, age 2-, and age 3- and 4-year-old children in settings to be implemented from April 2025. It must consult early years providers and Schools Forum. The final decision, following these consultations rests with the local authority.
3. Local authorities (LA) are allocated funding to support the provision of childcare in early years. There is a national funding formula that has been used to determine the funding rates for local authorities. The LA funding rates are calculated by using a base rate which is the same for all children regardless of where they live and their level of need. On top of this, additional funding is provided based on the proportion of children in each area who have additional needs using the following measures: deprivation, English as an additional language (EAL) and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This is to reflect the higher cost of meeting these children's needs. The rate is then adjusted according to area to reflect variations in costs across the country.
4. We have continued our approach of trying to provide as much funding as possible within the per-pupil hourly rates while keeping the mandatory inclusion and deprivation supplements to a minimum. The extended entitlements mean the overall funding pot is larger and so the financial value of these supplements is not reduced.
5. There is an increase this year to the pass-through rate. LAs have to pass through 96% of the funding directly to providers. Up to 4% can be retained to ensure the continued delivery of the LA statutory services for early years including for special educational needs and disability. We know that the pass-through rate is going to be increased to 97% at some point in the future.

Background

6. Childcare entitlements have been introduced in phases and there has been an increase in funding allocated to the local authority for this.
7. The entitlements that need to be planned for are:
 - a. the 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of children from 9 months up to 2 years old (due to be extended to 30 hours from 1 September 2025)
 - b. the 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 2-year-old children (due to be extended to 30 hours from 1 September 2025)
 - c. the 15 hours entitlement for families of 2-year-olds receiving additional support (formerly known as the 2-year-old disadvantaged entitlement)
 - d. the universal 15 hours entitlement for all 3 and 4-year-olds
 - e. the additional 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds
8. The new entitlements continue to have implications for setting the funding rate for early years for 2025 – 2026. DfE have acknowledged the difficulties in planning for uptake and have provided additional guidance through a number of webinars that have been attended by early years and finance colleagues. Local authorities need to plan for extended entitlements before having a clear idea of the uptake. Allocations are based on estimated take-up and these will need to be adjusted based on the actual take up each term, requiring additional headcounts to be undertaken by local authorities.
9. The changes continue to have implications for the local authority in terms of implementation, requiring an increase in the amount of time needed to check eligibility and administer and monitor this process as well as two more feature upgrades to Capita.
10. There separate hourly funding rates that South Gloucestershire will receive under this formula for 2025/2026. These are £11.31 per hour for under 2s, £8.36 per hour for 2-year-olds and £5.89 per hour for 3- and 4-year-olds.
11. Alongside the hourly rate the local authority has a number of supplements that can be applied.
12. The deprivation supplement is a mandatory supplement which is aimed at supporting settings who work with the most disadvantaged children. The purpose of the fund is to enable these settings to provide targeted support to reduce the significant impact economic disadvantage has on children’s development and attainment, which can affect their life chances. The special educational needs inclusion fund is also a mandatory supplement which supports local authorities to work with providers to address the needs of children with SEN who are taking up the entitlements and enable local authorities to commission SEN services to support this.
13. Discretionary supplements can also be applied. Rurality/sparsity supplement enables local authorities to support providers serving rural areas less likely to benefit from economies of scale. Flexibility supplement enables local authorities to support providers in offering flexible provision for parents. Quality supplement can be used to support workforce qualifications, or system leadership (supporting high quality providers leading other providers in the local area).

English as an additional language (EAL) recognises the differences in attainment in the early years foundation stage between children whose first language is English and those who have EAL. Contingency funding is money set aside for changes in the number of children taking up the entitlements throughout the year.

14. DfE have increased early years pupil premium from £0.68 per hour to £1.00 per hour. Disability access fund has also been increased from £910 per child to £938 per child.

15. South Gloucestershire Issues and Priorities

16. As a council we recognise that the sector is experiencing significant financial pressures. Increases to minimum wage and a rise in national insurance have a significant impact on the sustainability of EY settings. We are keen to support providers as much as we can while ensuring that we do not compromise the delivery of essential services for early years. Following engagement with the Early Years Working Group, South Gloucestershire has taken the decision to allocate out a higher percentage than is required and will be allocating out 96.7% of the hourly rate funding received for each age group. 3.3% will be retained to provide central services to the sector and to respond to the significant additional demands of meeting the needs of children with SEND and with processing and administering the expanded entitlements. Due to the increased entitlements, as the whole funding pot is bigger, the amount retained by the local authority will still support the increased services we need to provide as a result of the larger numbers of children who are entitled. The additional funding will provide:

- a. Additional capacity to check eligibility, process and track payments to providers and to complete monitoring as required by DfE
- b. Additional capacity in the finance team to process the large increase in numbers of payments
- c. Additional capacity within the data team to develop required monitoring reports
- d. Improve the payment mechanism so as to reduce workload of processing the increased numbers of payments
- e. Support to complete the required IT infrastructure upgrades
- f. Additional admin support to deal with the increased volume of queries
- g. Payments to providers to fund SEND briefings
- h. Additional early years staff to support meeting the needs of the increased numbers of children with SEND including at adviser level
- i. Extra capacity within the portage team to support meeting needs of children with complex SEND.

17. It should be noted that although we are able to offer a higher percentage passthrough this year, this is not a guarantee of the passthrough for the future. Any future rates will be dependent on funding coming in to the local authority and any changes in the DfE guidance.

18. We know from sector feedback and inclusion fund applications, that providers are experiencing an increase in the number of children with special educational needs. The inclusion supplement supports providers to meet that need. It should be noted that the early years block funding for inclusion is also supplemented by funding from the high needs block. This is combined with the funding from the early years block to create our inclusion fund to

provide support addressing needs for pupils with SEND. During 2023/24 the High Needs Block provided an additional £560k to supplement the early years contribution to the inclusion fund (two thirds of the contribution). There is increasing pressure on the High Needs Block to support SEND pupils of all ages and so the contribution the Early Years Block makes needs to be increased. Based on our projections, increased uptake related to the extended entitlements should provide for this without increasing the percentage of the inclusion supplement.

19. In South Gloucestershire we know that outcomes for pupils from families receiving additional support lag behind those of other pupils. The allocation of the deprivation fund is based on the number of universal hours taken up by children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) children in a setting. This supplement aims to reach the most disadvantaged children. While we predicted that the number of children receiving EYPP would increase last year, this did not happen. Total eligible children over 3 terms for 2022-2023 was 1142 and the figure for 2023 to 2024 was 1129. We anticipate that we will be able to meet any increasing need without an increase in the supplement. In addition, DfE have announced an increase to the PP payment raising this to £1.00 and this will help meet needs of these children.
20. South Gloucestershire, in common with other local authorities and nationally, has experienced a reduction in childminders over the last few years. The number of our childminders has fallen significantly and the percentage drop has been higher than the national figure which was a 10% drop in 2022 (data published May 2023) [Childcare and early years provider survey, Reporting year 2022 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics/service/gov.uk).

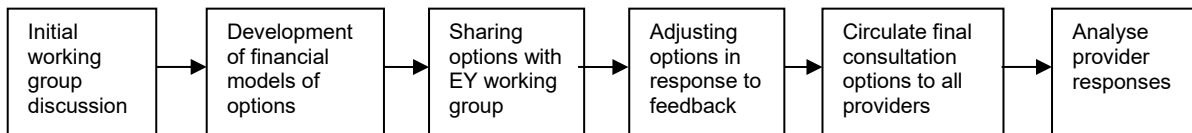
Table showing reduction in number of childminders in South Gloucestershire.

	September 2022	September 2023	September 2024
Number of childminders in SG	144	129	118
Number who left childminding	30	15	11
% leaving childminding	21%	12%	9%

21. We believe that childminders are a valued and crucial part of our childcare system and offer parents flexible childcare options that can meet their needs. With this in mind, and in consultation with the early years working group, we want to do what we can to encourage and retain childminders who offer childcare. To support this, we have included some options in our consultation which would reinstate a flexibility supplement where childminders are allocated an additional rate so that the sector can indicate their support for this.
22. Recruitment and retention of qualified staff also continues to be a huge challenge as low wages deter people from pursuing Early Years as a career option.
23. Last year we consulted with the sector and as a result moved childminders to monthly payments from the previous payment model of 70% up front. Providers other than childminders were also asked whether they would prefer a move to monthly payments. As a result of this question, we also asked whether there were any issues associated with this that we would need to address as a Council. This gave the sector the opportunity to raise any concerns before we make the decision to pay monthly, should that be the preferred outcome.

Developing the Consultation Proposals

24. The consultation proposals were developed through engagement with the Early Years Working Group and in response to their feedback. This was informed by detailed financial modelling working with finance colleagues. The following diagram outlines the process followed. All models produced were in line with national guidance and with information from the additional DfE webinars.



25. Feedback from the working group informed the development of the consultation that went out to all settings. The final consultation document circulated to settings followed opportunities for the working group to provide feedback on the developing models through meetings and via email. The funding announcement was delayed this year by DfE and we are grateful to the working group for their contributions at short notice to ensure that the consultation was able to be circulated as quickly as possible to allow the sector enough time to respond.

26. The initial working group discussion informed the development of options, for example, through a suggestion to reintroduce a flexibility supplement to support childminders.

27. A number of adjustments were made as a result of the working group input. The most significant changes included:

- a. Increasing the pass-through rate to be above 95% for all groups to maximise per pupil funding – the rate was increased to 96.7%. Due to the expanded entitlement modelling showed that this is affordable without compromising the early years services we need to provide to the sector.
- b. Including a model that increases the rate for 3 to 4-year-olds through taking from the under 2s group
- c. Providing options which include a flexibility for childminders

28. There are some indications that we may be required to move to monthly payments in future. Also, due to the volume of payments to process we will be looking to move to an online payment system. To inform this development we have asked for the views of providers other than childminders on a move to monthly payments.

Consultation Outcomes for Funding

29. The final consultation was circulated to all settings and childminders. See Appendix 1 for the full consultation paper. The sector were given 3 options and were asked to select their preferred option. In recognition of the fact that there were no responses from nursery classes last year, we circulated the consultation with a read receipt and followed up where providers were not accessing the communication.
30. Providers were given the rates for last year and information on what a 96% passthrough rate might look like for comparison. The full consultation document is in Appendix 1.
31. The summary of the 3 options is below. The commentary provides some contextual information about each of the options providers were asked to select from.

	Rates for 2024 for comparison	96% passported rates	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Description of option		96% passported through, includes childminder (CM) flexibility	96.7% passported through, no rise in inclusion or deprivation, includes CM flexibility	96.7% passported through, increase to Inclusion and deprivation, no CM flexibility	96.7% passported through with no increase to inclusion and deprivation & with childminder flexibility funded from under 2s
9-month-old rate	£10.27	£10.76	£10.85	£10.85	£10.83
2-year-old rates for from	£7.78	£7.89	£7.95	£7.95	£7.95
3- to 4-year-old rate	£5.22	£5.49	£5.52	£5.52	£5.53
Deprivation supplement	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%
Inclusion supplement	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%	1.3%
Flexibility supplement for childminders		£0.14	£0.14		£0.14

Summary of Consultation Outcome

32. The consultation period with the sector took place from 17 December to 9 January. Responses were through a SNAP survey. Information concerning the consultation was emailed to the sector with a read receipt twice and posted on the Virtual Learning

Environment (VLE) which is the standard platform in place locally for sharing information with the sector. Non-respondents were then directly contacted by email requiring a read receipt.

33. There were a total of 180 responses from childminders, pre-schools, day nurseries and nursery classes, representing 76% of the sector registered to accept funded children. 4 of the responses submitted did not select a preferred option for implementation, however 2 of them from the PVI sector did vote on the monthly payments part of the consultation.
34. There has been an increase in the response rate meaning there were an additional 40 responses this year. The table below shows the response rates to the consultation over the last 3 years. This allows us to be more confident that the views of the whole sector are being represented.

	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Number of responses from providers	111	139	180

35. The following table gives a breakdown of responses from the different provider types.

Type of provider	Number of responses	Percentage of total in South Gloucestershire
Childminders	82	80%
Private	72	81%
Voluntary	23	61%
Independent	1	100%
Nursery Classes	2	33%
Total	180	

57 settings chose not to respond. These included 21 childminders, 17 private providers, 15 voluntary providers and 4 nursery classes.

36. The table below shows the summary of all responses.

Type of provider	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Childminders	33	11	38
Private	6	35	31
Voluntary	2	6	14
Independent	0	1	0
Nursery Classes	0	1	1
Total	41	54	84
Percentage who selected the option	23%	30%	47%

37. Option 3 was selected as the preferred option by the majority of settings and childminders, with 47% of those who voted selecting this option. Option 1 was the least popular option.

38. The sector were supportive of a return to a childminder flexibility with 70% choosing an option that included this.
39. The second highest option was option 2 - without childminder flexibility. This option offered a higher deprivation supplement. DfE have increased the Early Years pupil premium payment from £0.68 per hour to £1.00. This should support those providers who feel this is an issue.
40. In terms of monthly payments for providers other than childminders, 45% of responses were in favour of being paid monthly and 51% did not support this option. The main comments from settings about being paid monthly were:
- Monthly payments would need to be spread across all 12 months
 - Concerns about additional work that this might involve, with one provider reporting that they had not voted because they would need an understanding of the implementation
 - Two providers felt that the current payment schedule causes them cashflow issues and monthly payments would be better

SEND Support from the Schools Block

41. During the last few years, Schools Forum have opted to provide £200k to support early years projects. The desired outcome for this theme is to reduce the reliance on EHCPs issued in Early Years by improving identification of need and access to support in early years. This has funded a number of crucial ongoing projects that have helped providers meet the needs of children with SEND including:
- a. Speech and language support including consultations with providers about individual children, Language Champion training and sessions for parents
 - b. Provision of parent groups by parent carer forum to help support children with complex needs
 - c. Additional portage support
 - d. Payment for the licence for Autism Education Trust training so that this can be delivered
42. Specific projects for 2024 – 2025 have been:
- a. Outreach project where Enable Trust has supported early years staff to meet more complex needs of children in their settings.
 - b. Five to Thrive project to support practitioners with using attachment-based model to identity and meet need.
 - c. Purchase of SEND resources that can be used to model strategies to meet need and loaned out to providers.
 - d. Supporting SEND training for childminders.
 - e. Paying for providers to attend essential SEND updates.
43. In order to plan for contracted work, there needs to be a clear steer on continuation of this funding. We would like to continue to focus on projects including:
- a. Contracting speech and language support to continue with identified projects
 - b. Expansion of New Siblands outreach work
 - c. Continuation of parent groups provided by Parent Carer Forum

- d. Expansion of SEND resources project following pilot
- e. Expansion of SEND childminders project following pilot
- f. Continuation of 5 to Thrive project with new cohorts
- g. Payments to enable providers to attend key SEND training

44. The specifics of the projects will be further defined and shared. The early years working group will be consulted to inform this development. Some projects are at the early stages of construction to address issues we have identified such as children with EHCPs achieving significantly below national. Clear scoping of all projects will be informed by evaluation of the work from this year and be shared with High Needs Working group in Term 4.

Recommendations

45. It is recommended that the Schools Forum note the outcome of the consultation and approve implementation of proposals put forward under Option 3, summarised below
- a. 9 months to 2-year-old funding rate is set at £10.83
 - b. 2-year-old funding rate is set at £7.95
 - c. 3- to 4-year-old funding rate is set at £5.53
 - d. Deprivation supplement is set at 0.6% and inclusion fund supplement is set at 1.3%
 - e. A flexibility supplement for childminders is set at £0.14.
46. It is recommended that Schools Forum support the proposals for continuation of the £200k spending for SEND projects to ensure continuity of delivery.

Author

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South Gloucestershire Council

SCHOOLS FORUM

16th January 2025

Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25 Quarter 2

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Schools Forum on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Safety Valve position as at Quarter 2 2024/25.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Funded budgets

2. The net DSG budget (as at July 2024) excluding academies and High Needs recoupment, is £151,093k. The DSG is forecasting an outturn overspend position of £38,884k, an increase of £3,056k since Quarter 1. This arises from a forecast in-year overspend of £13,757k, a forecast Safety Valve payment relating to the DSG recovery plan (£2,000k), a council contribution from the Financial Risks reserve relating the Safety Valve agreement (£333k) and a brought forward deficit balance of £27,460k.

3. Details of the DSG funding announcement including adjustments for Academy Conversions (Recoupment), High Needs and Early Years Block Adjustments are provided in table 1 below.

Table 1 – DSG Funding Announcement

DSG Budget	Net £'000
Revised Allocation (March 2024)	163,199
Adjustments and Recoupment	
1. Academy Conversions (1 st April to 30 th June 2024)	-11,398
2. High Needs Block – Import/Export Adjustment	-125
3. Early Years Block – updated January 2024 Census	-583
Total Revised DSG (July 2024)	151,093

4. The DSG funding comes from four funding block, the Schools Block, the Central Schools Services Block, the High Needs Block and the Early Years Block.

5. The overspend position by each funding block is provided in table 2 below (see column highlighted green) and the key changes and risks in the subsequent paragraphs.

Table 2 – Funding position by Blocks

Funding by Blocks	Gross Budget	EFA / Other Income Budget	Q2 Reserve	Budget Reserve (Usuable Approved Q1)	Net Budget (DSG)	Gross Exp	EFA / Other Income	Q2 Unusable Reserve (In Year DSG)	Net Exp	Over / (Under)
	£'000s	£'000s		£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Schools Block:										
Total Schools Block - Primary & Secondary Schools (excluding Academies)	78,615	-9,450	0	0	69,165	78,607	-9,442	0	69,165	0
Central Schools Services Block:										
Total Central Schools Services Block	3,472	-129	0	0	3,343	3,563	-224	4	3,343	0
High Needs Block:										
Schools & Independent Providers (including Academies)	54,362	773	-333	-10,744	44,058	58,224	-363	-13,803	44,058	0
Central Items	2,256	-266	0	-57	1,933	2,325	-334	-58	1,933	0
Total High Needs Block	56,618	507	-333	-10,801	45,991	60,549	-697	-13,861	45,991	0
Early Years Block:										
Private, Voluntary & Independent Providers	31,189	0	0	0	31,189	31,206	-17	0	31,189	0
Central Items	1,608	-303	0	100	1,405	1,494	-189	100	1,405	0
Total Early Years Block	32,797	-303	0	100	32,594	32,700	-206	100	32,594	0
Total In-Year DSG & EFA Funding	171,502	-9,375	-333	-10,701	151,093	175,419	-10,569	-13,757	151,093	0

Total DSG In Year Overspend	-13,757
DSG Deficit Reserve B/F	-27,460
DSG Safety Valve Agreement 2024/25 (DfE Contribution £2,000k)	2,000
DSG Safety Valve Council Contribution from Financial Risks Reserve	333
Total DSG Deficit Reserve	-38,884

DSG Reserve:	£'000s
DSG Deficit Reserve B/F from previous years (Appendix 7 - Unusable Reserve)	-27,460
Approved Budget 2024/25	-10,041
DSG Safety Valve Agreement 2024/25 - Forecast	2,000
DSG Safety Valve Council Contribution from Financial Risks Reserve	333
Request increase draw on DSG Reserve at Quarter 1 (£660k)	-660
Request increase draw on DSG Reserve at Quarter 2 (£3,056k)	-3,056
Total DSG Deficit Reserve (Appendix 7 - Unusable Reserve)	-38,884

Schools Block

6. The Schools Block is forecasting a breakeven position no change since Quarter 1.

Central Schools Services Block

7. The Central Schools Services Block is forecasting a £4k underspend position for Quarter 2.

Early Years Block

8. The Early Years Block is forecasting a £100k underspend position for Quarter 2, no change since Quarter 1.

High Needs Block and Safety Valve

9. The High Needs Block is forecasting a £13,681k overspend position for Quarter 2 before applying the £2,000k DSG safety valve payment and £333k council contribution. This represents an increase of £3,716k above the latest safety valve target for 2024/2025, which is an increase of £3,060k since Quarter 1.
10. The main pressure areas compared to the latest Safety Valve submission to DfE relate to Independent and Non-Maintained Special School Placements (£736k), High Needs Support in Primary and Secondary schools (£897k), Post 16 (£758k), South Gloucestershire Special School Placements (£621k), South Gloucestershire Resource Bases (£203k), OLA Special Schools and Resource Base placements (£462k), and Alternative Provision (£509k) these pressures have been partially offset against improvements across Outreach Project, Hospital Education and Other High Needs Areas (£470k). The pressures relate to demand and/or price changes as illustrated in Table 3 and detailed below.
11. Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools is reporting an additional pressure of £736k, compared to the safety valve, an increase of £693k since Quarter 1. This is due the forecast provision for current and new placements increasing by 6 and an increase in the average weekly price of £55 per week since Quarter 1.
12. High Needs Support in Primary and Secondary schools is reporting an additional pressure of £897k compared to the Safety Valve, an increase of £382k since Quarter 1. This is due to an increase in demand of 116 Education, Health and Care Plans which has been partially offset by the average weekly price being £12 per week less compared to Quarter 1.
13. Post 16 Education is showing an additional pressure of £758k compared to the safety valve, an increase of £1,415k since Quarter 1. This is due to an increase the average price of £91 per week, which has been partially offset against a reduction in demand of 10 placements since Quarter 1.
14. South Gloucestershire Special Schools is showing an additional pressure of £621k, an increase of £246k since Quarter 1, due to an increase in demand of 10 placements and the average price of £1 per week compared to Quarter 1.
15. South Gloucestershire Resource Bases is showing an additional pressure of £203k compared to the safety valve, an increase of £12k since Quarter 1.
16. OLA Special Schools and Resource Bases is showing an additional pressure of £462k compared to the safety valve, an increase of £192k since Quarter 1. This is due to an increase the average price of £71 per week which has been partially offset against a reduction of 4 placements.

17. Alternative Provision (AP) Pre-16 is showing an additional pressure of £509k compared to the safety valve, an increase of £387k since Quarter 1. This is due to an increase in the number AP packages being approved or requested of 41, which has been partially offset against the average weekly price reducing by £299 per week since Quarter 1.

18. It should be noted that the Quarter 2 figures include a contingency provision for new placements based on named and unknown placements therefore as the year progresses these will be updated with actuals and reported to Schools Forum.

Table 3 – High Needs Demand and Price

High Needs Pressure areas	Outturn 2021/22	Outturn 2022/23	Outturn 2023/24	Quarter 1 2024/25	Quarter 2 2024/25
Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools - Placements No.s	107	122	130	131	137
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£1,710	£1,614	£1,809	£1,789	£1,844
Statemented Support Provision including SG Pupils in OLA Schools No.	888	963	1,201	1,296	1,412
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£273	£269	£236	£232	£220
Post 16 - FE Independent Specialist Placements	27	28	37	38	43
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£1,184	£1,302	£1,037	£1,127	£1,300
Post 16 - FE Colleges	360	295	298	318	303
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£167	£184	£198	£131	£200
Post 16 Alternative Provision	53	57	143	155	155
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£378	£558	£433	£594	£623
Post 16 - Total Placements	440	380	478	511	501
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£255	£322	£358	£334	£425
Education other than at School SENHN No.s	7	13	19	26	31
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£681	£515	£521	£464	£390
Other Alternative Provision SENAP No.s	35	50	33	35	76
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£247	£366	£630	£802	£503
OLA Special Schools No.s	88	104	109	114	110
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£563	£606	£611	£668	£739
Early Years High Needs Support No.s (EHCPs only)	35	23	30	28	27
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£175	£201	£170	£354	£241
Special Schools No.s	492	517	557	592	602
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£561	£577	£616	£622	£623
Resource Bases No.s	139	145	154	158	156
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£570	£583	£471	£446	£454
PLC No.s	169	170	170	150	150
Average Weekly Price (38 wks)	£600	£622	£603	£657	£657

* during 2021/22 Alternative provision costs for Children in School monitored separately.

19. The Department continues to see an increase in the number of requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and the cost of providing support to young people with

an EHCP. In June and July, the combination of new EHCPs approved as well as the approval to extend support for existing education packages by a further year resulted in an annual cost against the DSG of £3,000,000.

20. Insufficient local special specialist provision results in reliance on more expensive Independent and Non-Maintained Schools, Education other than at Schools and Alternative Provision Packages. Whilst this pressure has been partially mitigated by increasing provision at New Horizons and the opening of Two Bridges Special Free School in September 2024, the number of young people in Post 16 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health issues has increased resulting in the reliance of more costly Alternative Provision support due to insufficient specialist courses within Further Education.
21. Following the council's latest safety valve submission, which is based on our Quarter 1 position, the Department for Education met with key staff to discuss the continuing cost and demand pressures compared to the safety valve targets as well as the proposal to increase the school block transfer amount in future years. These continuing pressures as well as the government's plans to remove the financial override on the DSG balance at the end of March 2026 is a key financial risk to the council in future..
22. As previously reported to School Forum, the demand and price increase as well as a shortage of Specialist placements is a national problem. The Local Government association and County Councils Network recently commissioned Isos Partnership to review the SEN system. A few of the key findings which support the challenges local authorities in England are currently facing are:
23. Since the 2014 reform of the SEND system, EHCPs has risen from 240,183 in 2015 to 575,973 in 2024, an increase of 140%.
24. A further 1.2 million children in schools are identified as requiring SEN support, up from 990,000 in 2015.
25. Rising costs on SEND outweighs the funding increases.
26. Demand is growing faster than capacity can be added.
27. The DfE's benchmarking data shows evidence that our programme of change is delivering improvements. We are now, for the first time, below the national average for the proportion of pupils receiving an EHCP. However, demand continues to grow. To mitigate the pressures, the People Department continues to work closely with School representatives in the High Needs Working Group and Schools Forum looking at future options such as offering more targeted prevention support which should reduce the number of EHCP requests and looking at cost productive ways of increasing local provision Specialist Provision.

Author

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South Gloucestershire Council

SCHOOLS FORUM (For Information)

16th January 2025

Special Schools Funding Arrangements (Slides)

South Gloucestershire Council

SCHOOLS FORUM (For Information)

16th January 2025

School Budget Update 2025 – 2026 (Verbal Update)

South Gloucestershire Council

SCHOOLS FORUM (For Information)

16th January 2025

**Current LA plans for commissioned specialist places 2025 – 2026 and future years
(update)**

South Gloucestershire Council

SCHOOLS FORUM

16th January 2025

Schools Forum Forward Plan 2025

Jan 2025	16 th	In-person meeting at Winterbourne Academy	
		Early Years Funding 2024-2025	Jo Briscoombe
		Q2 Financial Monitoring report 2024 – 2025	Mustafa Salih
		Special Schools Funding Arrangements Slides	Mustafa Salih
		School Budget Update 2025-2026 (verbal)	Mustafa Salih
		Current LA plans for commissioned specialist places 2025 -2026 and future years (update)	Hilary Smith

March 2025	13 th	Microsoft Teams	
		F40 update	Mustafa Salih
		Q3 DSG Report 2024-2025	Mustafa Salih
		Safety Valve update	Mustafa Salih
		EHC Breakdown	Hilary Smith
		High Needs Working Group Update (HNWG)	Susie Weaver
		Place Pressures	Hilary Smith
		Growth Funding Policy Update	Caroline Warren
		Falling Rolls Policy 2024-2025	Caroline Warren

May 2025	08 th	Provisional Forum Date – depending on need for any decision reports	
		Academisation update	Michelle Trigg
		Safety Valve update	Mustafa Salih

		HNWG update	Susie Weaver
		Mainstream Place Numbers	Hilary Smith

July 2025	03 rd	Microsoft Teams	
		Membership of the Forum	Michelle Trigg
		Schools in Financial Difficulty Update (Report) (Maintained Schools & Academies update)	Mustafa Salih
		Funding Update (including School's supplementary grant)	Mustafa Salih
		Outturn Report 2024-2025 verbal update (outturn report)	Mustafa Salih
		Financial Regulations for Schools	Justine Poulton
		Scheme for Financing Schools – DfE Directed Changes	Caroline Warren
		HNWG update	Susie Weaver

Sept 2025	25 th	Microsoft Teams	
		Schools Forum Membership update	Michelle Trigg
		Outturn 2024-2025 Report	Caroline Warren
		Proposed Financial Arrangements – Falling Rolls Funding (Low Pupil Number Contingencies)	Caroline Warren
		Financial Regulations for Schools	Justine Poulton
		Place Planning	Hilary Smith
		Safety Valve update	Mustafa Salih
		Special Schools Funding update	Mustafa Salih
		Year 3 of New Banding and Top-Up Arrangements Review and Update	Mustafa Salih

Nov 2025	06 th	Proposed in person meeting – venue to be confirmed.	
		Current Position on school places across schools system in South Gloucestershire Update	Hilary Smith
		High Needs Working Group Update	Susie Weaver
		School Budgets 2025-2026 (verbal update)	Mustafa Salih
		Schools in Financial Difficulty Update	Deb Luter

		Q1 Financial Performance Report 2023-2024	Caroline Warren

Dec 2025	04 th	Microsoft Teams	
		Schools Budget Announcement	Mustafa Salih
		Implementation of new banding and top up arrangement for special schools and alternative provision	Mustafa Salih
		Proposed Financial Amendments: Breach Funding	Caroline Warren

ANY OTHER BUSINESS