

**REPORT TO:** Schools Forum

**DATE:** 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director – Education,  
Inclusion and Provision

**SUBJECT:** Delivering Better Values Programme  
(DBV)

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To update Schools' Forum on the Delivering Better Values Programme across Halton Borough.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 2.1 The report is noted. Schools' Forum members understand the need to engage fully with the Delivering Better Values (DBV) Programme in order to identify and implement long term system change to help alleviate financial risk and overspend.
- 2.2 Schools Forum members encourage education/Early Years colleagues; wider stakeholders; parents/carers and children and young people with SEND to engage with Newton Europe and CIPFA to share views and experiences to inform diagnostic position and shape grant application process and system change as part of DBV programme.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Delivering Better Values:  
Delivering Better Values (DBV) is a DFE programme where Halton have been identified due to our high needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) overspend position. We are amongst a third of Local Authorities identified in this middle tier programme. Halton LA are working g with Newton Europe and CIPFA (commissioned by the government to lead the DBV programme) to help identify the causes of high needs overspend and then apply for up to £1 million of funding to take steps to reduce our high needs DSG overspend by planning and implementing long term system change.

Local authority officers have been providing data relating to the numbers of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP); their age ranges and primary areas of need, alongside financial information to support the discovery and diagnostic phase. This data is being collated, analysed in order to identify pressure points

across our system and help to identify key drivers for overspend. This work has already outlined that caseload is our biggest driver of expenditure, with our high needs budget expenditure increasing by 68% over the last 6 years.

Analysis also identified that Halton have seen the second highest growth rate in mainstream EHCP's nationally. Our main primary areas of need are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in the primary phase and ASD, SLCN and Social Emotional and Mental health needs (SEMH) in the secondary phase. ASD and SLCN as a primary need account for seven out of 10 new starts in mainstream special schools and for CYP in the secondary transition years, i.e., ages 11 to 12, ASD, SLCN and SEMH are the main primary needs, accounting for 85% of all Children and Young People. SLCN, ASD and SEMH are the main primary needs accounting for nearly 90% of all EHCP starts in Mainstream schools.

Analysis shows that primary and secondary transition years across all provisions are the ages when most children and young people start with an EHCP. Case reviews and engagement with stakeholders will consider why these transition years' experience such an increase and how needs can be met and transitions supported to reduce such a significant increase in EHCP's at these phases. Enquiries will also consider how needs can be supported in a timely way.

Unlike other provisions, Halton see a high age distribution of new starts across secondary years in Independent Non- Maintained Special School settings (INMSS). Understanding how we can support this cohort in non-independent settings means we focus our resources more evenly on the rest of the population.

Unit cost prices have been analysed and whilst there have been increases in placement costs these are not seen as a key driver for Halton's high needs DSG overspend, caseload is the greatest pressure point.

Officers attended national DBV training throughout August and early September to focus upon further discovery work and plans to engage with stakeholders during the Autumn term of 2023 leading to an application for funding during December 2023-January 2024. As part of this programme, the Local Authority will submit an application for up to one million pounds of funding to cover long term system change aiming to meet needs in an effective and cost efficient way to reduce overspend on the high needs dedicated schools grant (DSG).

### **3.2 Next Steps:**

Case reviews are currently ongoing and surveys have been shared and are available on the Local Offer, for parents/carers; education and wider professionals, children and young people to complete and return. Engagement from all stakeholder groups is vital to gain a representative

understanding of experience and how practice across the system can improve and help to reduce high needs spend.

Once all data analysis, survey findings and case reviews have been completed, forecast information will be shared by Newton Europe and CIPFA to identify the potential trajectory.

Stakeholders will work closely with Newton Europe and CIPFA to use identified drivers and caseload volume details to inform strategic plan to drive positive change. Focused priorities for action will form part of the DBV grant application process and will be submitted through December. The first modules one and two will be signed off formally by strategic leaders and submitted to DFE via Newton Europe and CIPFA.

If grant applications are approved by DFE during early 2024, funding will be released and officers and stakeholders will work closely with CIPFA and Newton Europe to progress through an implementation phase of plans to address system change and will work through to achieving a sustainable model moving forwards.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Current financial implications on the forecast trajectory would lead to significant growth in high needs DSG overspend. Acting decisively and implementing an approved DFE plan informed by key drivers for EHCP growth and overspends, will lead to £1million funding to drive system change and will result in both cost avoidance and savings. Forecast information will be shared once full analysis has been completed.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **5.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

It is essential that children and young people's needs are met in a timely and effective manner, but also securing best value for all. Acting upon detailed analysis, bespoke to Halton needs, local context and systems, will lead to improved practice to meet the needs of our children and young people with SEND.

##### **5.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None.

##### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

None.

##### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

##### **5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

## **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 We need to engage fully with the DBV programme to reduce long term financial risk.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings and children and young people with SEND.

## **8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None identified.