

Further Information on the Four New Recommendations for 2022/23

1. Schools Block - Replacement of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant

- Since 2017, local authorities have received from the DfE a School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB) to support their “core” school improvement activities, with the amount received calculated to be proportionate to each authority’s number of maintained schools. Our allocation for the 2021/22 academic year, indicatively, would be £267,000.
- “Core” improvement activities are set out in Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) and in the Schools Causing Concern guidance.
 - Part 4 of the 2006 Act provides local authorities with statutory powers to warn and to intervene in schools causing concern, through issuing a warning notice setting out actions the governing body are to take – with powers to require the governing body to enter into arrangements; to appoint additional governors; to provide for the governing body to consist of interim executive members; or to suspend the right to a delegated budget, if the governing body fails to take the required action.
 - The Schools Causing Concern guidance sets out expectations that local authorities should: Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress; Work closely with the relevant Regional School Commissioner (RSC), diocese and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve; Where underperformance has been recognised in a maintained school, pro-actively work with the relevant RSC, combining local and regional expertise to ensure the right approach, including sending warning notices and using intervention powers where this will improve leadership and standards; Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools; and enable other schools to access the support they need to improve; Support educational recovery from the pandemic.
- On 29 October 2021, the DfE published a consultation, which proposes to reduce the value of SIMB grant for local authorities by 50% for the period April 2022 to March 2023 and then to cease the grant entirely from April 2023. Within the consultation, the DfE sets out its rationale for this change. The DfE also proposes that local authorities will have the power in the Regulations to fund all improvement activities, including the core improvement activities previously funded by the SIMB grant, via de-delegation of funds from maintained schools’ budget shares, with the agreement of their Schools Forum or with the agreement of the Secretary of State, in instances where the Schools Forum does not agree.
- This consultation closed on 26 November. Although the DfE has still to announce the outcomes, we must plan on the basis that the DfE will go ahead. Should the DfE not go ahead with its proposal, we would not enact our proposal to de-delegate funds.
- The complete removal of the SIMB grant at April 2023 will be a larger issue for us to consider with the Schools Forum for the 2023/24 DSG budget cycle. Immediately however, we wish to seek approval from the Schools Forum to de-delegate in 2022/23 from mainstream maintained primary and secondary schools for the purpose of directly replacing the grant monies that will be lost to the Local Authority.

- We currently estimate that, had the SIMB grant continued at current rates, we would have received £240,600 for the period April 2022 to March 2023, taking account of planned / possible academy conversions. As currently proposed, the DfE will still allocate 50% of this value, meaning that we will need to recover in the region of £120,300 via de-delegation. Incorporating into the calculation expected academy conversions during 2022, we calculate that we will need to de-delegate roughly £4.29 per pupil from maintained primary and secondary schools to recover this value. This can be seen in Appendix 2. Please note that this value is subject to confirmation. £4.29 is roughly a contribution cost of £900 per form of entry per primary and secondary school.
- The Local Authority has a programme of monitoring, intervention and support for the 2021/22 academic year, which is currently funded by the SIMB grant. The Authority will use the 50% reduced SIMB grant, combined with the replacement 50% monies available following de-delegation, to continue this programme for the period April 2022 to March 2023. A large proportion of the Authority's programme allocates the SIMB monies to reimburse schools that provide peer-to-peer school-led support for maintained schools. A good proportion of the programme also provides maintained schools with support for school governance. Key activities are:
 - Induction of new headteachers (5 days support for each new headteacher of a maintained school from an experienced and success Headteacher Partner).
 - Support for interim / acting headteachers (5 days support for each new headteacher of a maintained school from an experienced and success Headteacher Partner).
 - Curriculum support for middle leaders in primary schools and subject heads in secondary schools.
 - Support to Schools Causing Concern, with the support model activities split between the Local Authority and a partner school.
 - Leaders of Governance support schools where governance needs development, challenge and modelling of good practice.
 - Advice to governing bodies in difficulty.

2. Early Years Block - Local Authority Capacity Early Years Function and Entitlements

- We propose to introduce a new contribution, at an initial value of £100,000 in 2022/23, for the purpose of increasing the Local Authority's capacity that is available to support the delivery of the early years function and entitlements, focusing, in particular, on communication, provider sustainability, quality, compliance and on the processes that are required for the effective delivery of the Early Years Single Funding Formula, in support of parents and providers.
- This contribution is funded from the Early Years Block settlement. Including the £100,000, the total value of budget in 2022/23 that is proposed to be held within the Early Years Block for central support services is £304,000. This compares with £365,000 held in 2020/21. There are no calls on funds retained in other DSG Blocks. There are relationships between the proposals here and the proposals to increase the Local Authority's capacity within the Central Schools Services Block. These proposals combine for the same purposes.
- This is a request for an initial budget of £100,000, which will be spent primarily on staffing capacity. It is an on-going budget provision. We anticipate that we will discuss with the Schools Forum how this budget, and the staffing capacity it enables, is also increased incrementally over the next 3 years.
- We presented funds benchmarking to the last Schools Forum meeting, based on 2021/22 information (Document NM Appendix 1). This benchmarking continues to confirm that we retain centrally a

significantly lower value of Early Years Block funding, for the purposes of supporting providers and the delivery of the early years function and entitlements, than the average of other local authorities.

- This position has become unsustainable and the Local Authority has identified the immediate need to begin to develop capacity (the Authority's staffing capacity within our early years service), focusing in particular on beginning to increase capacity for the following areas:
 - **Sustainability** – Working to address issues relating to the sustainability of the PVI early years and childcare sector, including issues that have come from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on already present regional and national pressures relating to staff recruitment and retention. A workforce development / CPD support programme will be developed to support the childcare market, as part of the economic recovery plan, by enabling parents to go out to work and to participate in education and training.
 - **Quality of childcare provision** - A greater focus on the consistency of good quality childcare. This will support the most vulnerable children in the District to receive the best possible early education and to improve their readiness for school. An improved and bespoke training offer will be developed, including a focus on Ofsted inspection outcome improvement themes.
 - **Early Years Single Funding Formula administration** – The administrative requirements behind the EYSFF are now much more complicated and time intensive, including as a result of the extended 30 hours entitlement, than they were at the inception of the EYSFF. Whilst bringing the administration of the early years funding function for both PVI providers and for schools into a single early years service, this service requires additional capacity to deliver the EYSFF effectively, accurately and on a timely basis. The service also requires capacity to continue to develop new technology (such as the Providers Headcount Portal) and to develop tools to enable providers as well as parents to better understand their entitlement to provision and funding mechanisms.
 - **Funding compliance** – Visits to providers, to check compliance in relation to the allocation of entitlement funding and that providers are meeting the terms and conditions of the early years entitlement funding agreements, are an important part of the Authority's function. Visits do currently take place, but they are subject to the availability of Local Authority officer capacity. A more established rolling programme of funding compliance visits will help ensure consistent quality across the District and that providers are appropriately challenged, with a reliable evidence base, should they fail to meet the terms and conditions of funding. The early years service will also have greater capacity to continue to develop other tools for the early detection of non-compliance, including the detection of possible fraud.
 - **Better communication** - A new communication strategy will be developed across the early years and childcare sector to cover parents, the public, professionals and providers. This strategy, and better communication, will be focused on increasing the take up of places as well as improving the quality of information that is available.

3. Central Schools Services Block – Pupil Admissions

- We propose to increase the existing Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) budget for the Pupil Admissions Service by £150,000, on the 2021/22 budget base of £737,000. This is an on-going budget provision.

- This increase in budget will secure additional capacity that is essential for the Local Authority to deliver effectively its statutory admissions function on an on-going basis. The £150,000 is funded from the budget headroom that is available within the CSSB settlement, when the full value of the monies that were added to the CSSB in 2021/22, for the former Teacher Pensions Grant for centrally employed teacher, is retained within the CSSB, rather than transferred into the High Needs Block (as it was in 2021/22).
- We presented funds benchmarking to the last Schools Forum meeting, based on 2021/22 information (Document NM Appendix 1). Whilst there are limitations within these comparison, as it is not possible to identify how different authorities approach the financing of admissions appeals nor the co-ordination of in year applications, this benchmarking does evidence that we currently spend a lower value per pupil on our statutory admissions function than the national median average. The national median average in 2021/22 is £8.10 per pupil. This compares against £7.18 in Bradford. On a cash basis, if we spent at the national median average per pupil, our CSSB budget would be £94,400 higher. Given the pressure on admissions that we manage, including the number of in year applications that we process, we might actually expect to spend above the national median average.
- The Pupil Admissions Service ensures that every relevant child of statutory school age living in the area is offered a mainstream school place. The Service:
 - Co-ordinates applications for children starting mainstream primary (reception) and mainstream secondary (year 7) at the normal point of admission to ensure that, on the relevant national offer date, every child receives one offer of a school place.
 - Co-ordinates in-year applications for most mainstream schools and academies in Bradford, ensuring that applicants applying outside the normal time are offered a place within 15 school days. There is no statutory duty to be part of co-ordination and, for those schools who opt out, the Local Authority is still responsible for ensuring any child who is lawfully refused a place secures a place elsewhere.
 - Administers a Fair Access Panel, which ensures particularly that vulnerable children are offered in-year places quickly and that no one school or academy is required to take more than a fair share of additional pupils.
 - Designs and publishes literature for parents explaining how to apply for a school place. The Service also maintains a website and an online admissions portal. The Service securely maintains and runs an Admissions Database and oversees relevant admissions data being imported and exported to schools and other local authorities.
 - Is available to address queries from parents, schools and other professionals, in writing, on the phone and in person, including a school open events.
- We have not reviewed the sufficiency of the Pupil Admissions budget within the CSSB for a number of years. There have been a number of changes recently to the education and school admissions landscape, which have changed the capacity needs of the Service, including:
 - Growth in size of the school population in Bradford. During the academic year 2020/21, the Service received in excess of 7,000 applications for primary school places and 8,000 applications for secondary places.
 - Growth in the number of children moving to Bradford outside the normal point of admission. During the 2020/21 academic year, there were more than 6,600 in-year applications (compared with 6,000 in the previous year). Between July 2021 and 7 October 2020 (census day), the Admissions Service placed 2,270 in-year applicants. This is compared with 1,200 during the same time-period in the previous year. Every application received by the Service before the 7 October was sent to a school for admission on census day. This was only possible through the use of temporary staff and overtime.

- Growth in the number of academies, resulting in more complex and more time-intensive processes.
- The New School Admissions Code 2021, which sets out much clearer timescales for placing children in year and via the Fair Access process, resulting in the need for pupils to be placed within 15 days and a need to hold more Fair Access meetings.
- An independent review of our Pupil Admissions Service, conducted in 2021, identified that changes to the Service are needed to:
 - Improve in-year processes and the administration of the Fair Access Protocol, to ensure that children are offered places and admitted quickly, and that schools are held to account if they do not admit.
 - Improve the quality and timeliness of information shared with schools.
 - Make better use of technology to increase efficiency.
 - Make improvements to customer focussed information, such as the website and letters to parents.
- Improvements have already been made. However, without additional funding, the Pupil Admissions Services will not have the capacity to consistently meet statutory duties effectively. Additional funding is required deliver greater on-going staffing capacity to ensure:
 - All in-year applicants are offered places within statutory timeframes all year round.
 - All relevant applicant information is shared promptly with schools in an accessible format.
 - Statutory processes are quickly followed with schools that refuse to admit.
 - The data needed to more effectively place pupils via the Fair Access Process is available.
- Forum members will especially recognise that there is a “spend to save” element in respect of having sufficient capacity and effective processes to maximise the placement of new applications, especially over the summer and early autumn, before the October Census is taken, so that the value of formula funding received by schools is maximised.

4. Central Schools Services Block – Education Services Planning (Places Planning) and Consultation

- We propose to fund a new budget of £140,000 in 2022/23 from the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) in support of the Local Authority’s statutory education services planning (places planning) and consultation function. Referring to Appendix 3, this budget comes under the Statutory and Regulatory Duties provisions, “Planning for the education service as a whole (Sch 2, 15b)” and “Consultation costs relating to non-staffing issues (Sch 2, 19)”.
- The £140,000 is funded from the budget headroom that is available within the CSSB settlement. It is an on-going budget provision. There are no calls on funds retained in other DSG Blocks. There are relationships between the proposals here and the proposals to increase the Local Authority’s capacity within the Early Years Block. These proposals combine for the same purposes.
- The budget will be spent on staffing capacity, to develop the Local Authority’s capacity in Pupil Places Planning (Education Sufficiency) and in Information Management. Whilst having wider positive impact, this budget will clearly contribute the Authority’s work around the development of specialist places funded via the High Needs Block.

- Regarding Pupil Places Planning, the Local Authority holds the statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for all pupils living in the Bradford District, including specific duties that must be discharged for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Whilst the Local Authority must ensure there are sufficient school and specialist places available, places planning must be based on robust processes and evidence, as, for example, creating or retaining too many places would result in financial and administrative pressures on schools and academies. The Schools Forum is already aware that the school population in Bradford is forecasted to reduce over the medium term, due to demographic changes. Additional staffing will be available to support the following:
 - **Manage (and reduce) surplus places** - Additional officer capacity will allow a greater focus on a flexible system, which keeps surplus places to a minimum but has options to deliver additional capacity 'in-year' if required. Long term pupil projections in Bradford are accurate (within 3%). However, to plan well for in-year applicants, further staffing resource is required to track in-year data and trends.
 - **Delivering the strategic plan for specialist places** – The Strategic Plan for the Sufficiency of Specialist Places for Children and Young People in Bradford sets out the plans for delivering additional specialist places to meet the demand for specific needs of children and young people in the Bradford District with Education, Health and Care Plans. Increased officer capacity available to deliver this strategy, amongst other positive impacts, will also support ensuring our avoidance of unnecessary high cost out of area placements.
 - **Consistent place planning across all sectors** - The Local Authority will develop a greater standardisation of our approach to planning and reporting across all age groups and types of provisions. This will help to maximise how resources are invested in schools, academies and in other provisions. Changes in place numbers will be analysed across education sectors, thus allowing place planning issues to be managed more effectively and more efficiently.
- Regarding Information Management,
 - **SEND Intelligence** - Additional capacity will be used to develop intelligence to support the delivery of The Strategic Plan for the Sufficiency of Specialist Places for Children and Young People in Bradford.
 - **Re-focus on quality of childcare data** – capacity will be available so that the Authority can more pro-actively gather childcare sufficiency data, liaising more closely with the Families Information Service and Family Hubs in the Prevention and Early Help Service.
 - **Improved reporting** – additional capacity will be invested in the development of new reporting and analytical mechanisms, which will provide a more effective data offer and which will allow decision makers to make well informed decisions.