

Committee:	School Forum
Meeting Date:	22 October 2015
Title:	High Needs Block Update
Author:	Michael Quinton
Decision making / consultative / information:	Information

What is the Forum being asked to decide?

1. The Forum is being asked to note the developments and progress being made within the High Needs Block (HNB).

Reason for recommendation

2. It was requested by Forum that updates on the HNB were to be provided to the Forum as a standing item due to the current pressures in this area

Alternative options

3. This is an information paper after on-going discussions over recent Forum meetings looking at the HNB.

Who will be affected by this decision?

4. The HNB funding impacts on all Local Authority (LA) Maintained Schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) Special Schools, Academies, other specialist provision, Out of County Placements and Central Special Educational Needs services.

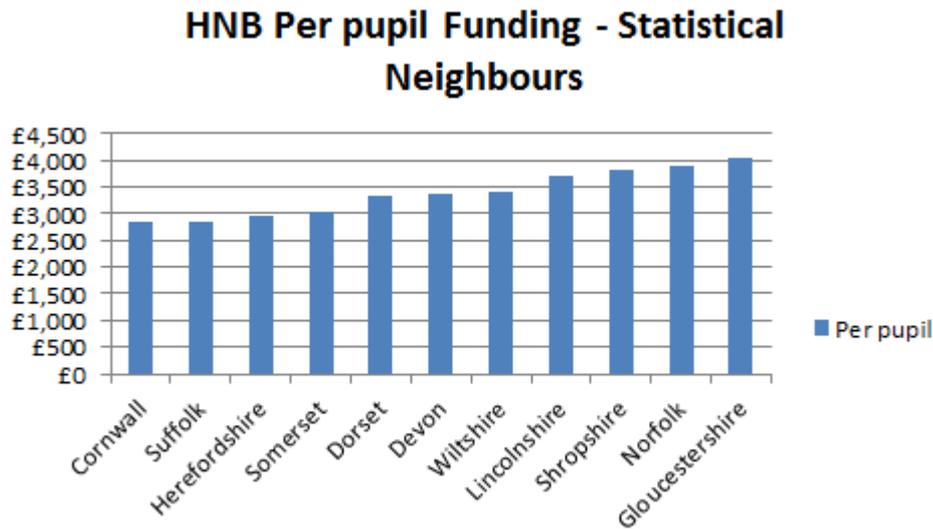
Main Body of the Report

Current position and progress

5. There continues to be cost pressures on the HNB in 2015-16. Based on spend and known commitments, quarter 2 forecasting is showing an overspend of approximately £2.5m. This is a reduction of £0.8m compared to the level of overspend reported in 2014-15 of £3.2m.
6. The main areas of concern continue to be:
 - Out of County placements - **£1.5m**
 - Education Other Than At School - **£0.8m**
 - Top Up payments - **£1.3m**

There will be some areas under spending against budgets which will mitigate the over spending.

- Also with Suffolk being a low funded LA it means that the scope to reallocate DSG reduces. It can be seen compared to our statistical neighbours that the amount allocated per SEN pupil is low:



- Over the past 18 months and whilst this has been a regular agenda item of Forum meetings, progress has been made in a number of areas and on different initiatives.
- First and foremost it's about the pupils and learners in our schools and specialist provision, ensuring they have the right level of support, resources available and where possible remain in their local areas and communities. Secondly it's about reducing spending where appropriate and getting better use of the funding available.

The Local Authority have:

- Obtained comprehensive data regarding the profile of need for vulnerable learners in Suffolk which will aid and inform LA decisions.
- Improved joint commissioning with partners.
- Where appropriate, increased place numbers in specialist provision
- Increase funding for Post 16 Learning now that more learners will stay in education until 25 and also more parental choice through Education Health Care plans (EHC).
- Implemented a policy for Targeted SEN support where schools have a high proportion of pupils with SEN.
- Development of multi-agency assessment centre in the north of the county.
- Developing In Year Fair Access Panel (IYFAP).
- Increasing capacity in the County Inclusive Resource Team.
- Review Top up Banding descriptors / matrix and implement a new Dual Placement Policy.

- Education & Learning restructure to ensure that inclusion and attainment are equal priorities.
10. IYFAP is working well. Permanent exclusions have reduced by 83% since April 2015 compared to the period September 14 – March 15. Engagement from schools and other agencies is good with excellent representation from all areas. IYFAP is also demonstrating earlier intervention. Managed moves (and reintegration) have increased by 80% since 2013-14.
 11. PRUs have agreed to increase their offering through a new SLA without any additional investment
 12. Joint commissioning is improving. The LA have agreed with Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group's a joint framework for children and young people with SEN which has led to improved collaboration and partnership working and providing better value for money.

Pressures and Concerns

13. The LA is reiterating that there is a collective responsibility on the HNB, the pupils and learners which it supports and how the funding is best used. The Forum plays an important role in supporting this and consulting on decisions taken by the LA. Other areas include:
 - Increase in demand and capacity. Population increases and % of pupils and learners with additional needs is on the rise.
 - Top up payments will increase, and why it is imperative that this area of funding is reviewed as previously highlighted.
 - Gaps in provision – Emotional, Behavioural, Social Difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
 - Reduction in Health contributions.
 - Exclusions and clawback, however if these reduce, will mitigate against spend in other areas.

Recovery Plan

14. The LA is now working on the recovery plan which identifies the actions needed to address the increasing demands in the HNB. The 3 main areas of focus are:
 - Increase the 'Local Offer'
 - Develop locality ownership for all learners
 - Robust Quality Assurance arrangements to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners and deliver best value.
15. The LA now needs to build on the early success of some of the work already implemented and also that of IYFAP and the QA arrangements which allows schools to play a more active role. The time line for this work to be completed and fully implemented is January 2017.

Financial Impact

16. Already there will be an impact in reducing spend in some areas and it is hoped that the forecasted underspend in 2015-16 reduces further.

However these proposals will need time to be implemented and bedded in. Therefore there could be continuing pressures on DSG as a whole during this period.

17. In 2015-16 any overspend on the HNB will need to be recovered from future years DSG allocations. In previous years any significant overspends have been mitigated by under spending in other areas i.e. Early Years Block, but no such underspends are being forecast in the current year.