

Agenda Item 7

TITLE	Update on HNB & SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 13 th October 2021
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This reports forms part of regular reporting to Schools Forum, informing areas of statutory decision making and improving visibility and consultation on wider Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial matters.

RECOMMENDATION

Schools Forum is asked to note the update on the SEND IIP and associated programme actions.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report provides Schools Forum with an update on the High Needs Block, SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme and associated deficit management plan.

Update on the High Needs Block Budget & SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme

.01 Purpose of the Report

To provide Schools Forum with an update on the High Needs Block, SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme and deficit management plan.

.02 Recommendation

Schools Forum is asked to note the update on the SEND IIP and associated programme actions.

.03 Background

In December 2020, Schools Forum met to consider in detail the complexities and pressures facing the High Needs Block, and the programme of work underway to drive forward improvements and address the financial challenges faced.

At the time of budget setting in March 2021, initial projections indicated a £2.5m shortfall on High Needs Block resources for the 2021/22 financial year, with latest figures reporting an increased deficit position as the number of children and young people in the borough with an EHCP continue to grow.

This report provides an update on the significant programme of work ongoing.

.04 2021/22 Financial Position – Key Changes in Forecast

As reported in the Revenue Monitoring report earlier in this meeting's agenda, the current HNB forecast sees a £653k adverse movement on that reported previously to Forum.

The previous forecast included assumptions on movements and a level of new EHCPs for the start of the 2021/22 academic year in September. The current position takes account of those known movements and additions for the new academic year and shows a higher than assumed level of activity from September onwards.

The key movements in forecast are across 3 setting types:

- WBC Mainstream Schools : ↑ £113k / 33 pupils (7%)
- Other LA Special Schools : ↑ £263k / 17 pupils (30%)
- Independent & Non-Maintained Special Schools : ↑ £219k / 16 pupils (13%)

While absolute numbers have increased, assumed average costs have moved differently across the 3 areas identified above.

For WBC mainstream top-ups, the number of EHCPs has increased by 15% from that in June, rising from 420 to 481. In June 46% of EHCPs in this category were funded for 20-25 hours, with 9% above 31 hours of funded support. That % spread has not changed, with the overall rise in numbers moving in proportion to that experienced previously, holding average costs stable

What has increased at a greater rate than previously assumed is those EHCPs in Early Year settings. At the start of this financial year 4 EHCPs attracted top-up funding in Wokingham mainstream settings, with 12 now funded, and increase of 200%.

For Out of Borough Special Schools, the number of EHCPs has increased by almost 28% from that in June, rising from 57 to 73. However the proportion of those costing more than £25k per year has also increased, reflecting a shift in the level of complexity, and providing for a larger impact on the forecast.

Further information is provided in the activity analysis in Appendix C of the Revenue Monitoring Report earlier on the agenda.

.05 Children & Young People with SEND in Wokingham

As previously reported to Schools Forum, the number of children & young people in Wokingham with an EHCP has risen by over 60% since 2017/18 with the number now above 1,400. The SEND Service are currently seeing around 30 requests to assess per month, with around 95% of those resulting in an EHCP.

Previous forecast assumptions were based on 1,066 funded EHCPs by September 2021, an anticipated rise of 7% on that experienced in June. The actual September position is 1,132 funded EHCPs, a rise of 14% on that experienced in June.

Current evidence is that the rate of requests to assess is plateauing in terms of growth. EHC requests are expected to continue to grow although a spike over the summer months on requests now looks to be reducing. However, the effect of COVID is becoming more apparent which is being kept under review, but provides some caveat to future modelling assumptions. Scrutiny of assessment requests is high and currently appropriate highlighting an increase to be reviewed through the IIP and Graduated Response work over the next 6 months.

We are also about to request a joint commissioned focus on assessment requests with our colleagues from health looking at key support from the CCG.

.06 SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme Timeline

As reported to Forum previously, is a large, ambitious programme of improvement and innovation, which currently runs until December 2022.

Governance of the programme is provided in Appendix A.

A high level timeline outlining the work of the IIP is provided in Appendix B.

.07 SEND Sufficiency Planning

Work on the SEND Sufficiency project has continued and has included very recent visits to schools with resource bases to inform the report. The report will be finalised and shared over the next few months with a series of proposals for consideration and enactment.

.08 Therapy Services for Children & Young People

Speech and language services, occupational therapy services and physiotherapy services commissioned by Wokingham Borough Council support many children and young people.

The Children and Young People's Integrated Therapy Service (CYPIT) provides speech and language services, occupational therapy services and physiotherapy services for children and young people who have an EHCP. It is an important service to help children and young people reach their potential. Help may take the form of training to school staff, setting up targeted groups, individualised therapy planning, and direct intervention tailored to an individual child's needs.

Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire Councils are working together to discuss a future vision of what speech and language services, occupational therapy services and physiotherapy services for children and young people who have an EHCP should look like.

Wokingham is the lead authority for the work with governance provided through the Berkshire West Children's Therapies Commissioning Group, chaired by the Assistant Director for People Commissioning at WBC.

We can't do this, without the input of colleagues and partners and we are developing some short survey questionnaires to help us gather feedback. Once these are finalised, we will seek to ask a broad range of stakeholders to complete the questionnaires and share their views, experiences, and suggestions. We expect this work to commence in October 2021.

Responses will help shape the Council's development of therapy services for children and young people with an EHCP in the future and how these services can best meet the needs of our local children, young people, and their families.

.09 Financial Outlook & Deficit Management Plan

Addressing the challenges on the High Needs Block in the short term is complex, particularly in light of the continuing significant rise in the number of children and young people with an EHCP.

The significant work being taken forward under the governance of the SEND IIP provides a platform for a longer term reduction of out of borough placements, the key to unlocking financial sustainability. Work continues across a range of actions in support of that overall objective.

The LA met with the ESFA on the 8th September to discuss the local financial position, the programme of work under way, and assumptions underpinning longer term financial modelling. This provided an opportunity to discuss modelling assumptions and inform the next stage of that work.

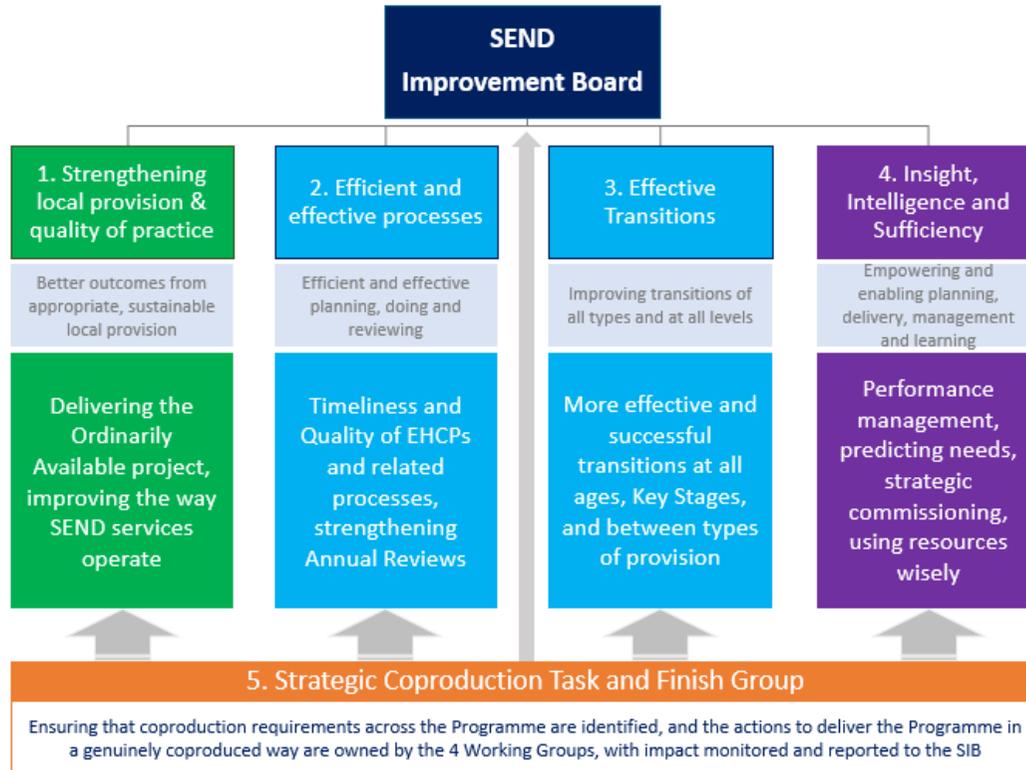
Detailed modelling continues to inform multi-year budget planning and further updates on this will be brought to the next meeting of Schools Forum.

.10 **High Needs Block Awareness Training**

As reported to the July meeting of Schools Forum, awareness training sessions will be rolled out as part of enhanced understanding of High Needs Block funding amongst colleagues, supporting informed decision making.

Original plans for September were postponed due to availability of key members of the Finance team. Sessions will be held in advance of December Schools Forum and dates will be published prior to half term.

SEND IIP Governance



Group Remits

SEND Improvement Board

1. Overall accountability for improved outcomes
2. Retained responsibility for WSoA delivery
3. Acts as the Programme Board for SEND Innovation and Improvement Programme
4. Quarterly Progress and Performance Reports
5. Joining the dots and breaking down silos
6. Horizon scanning and looking ahead

Working Groups

1 2 3 4

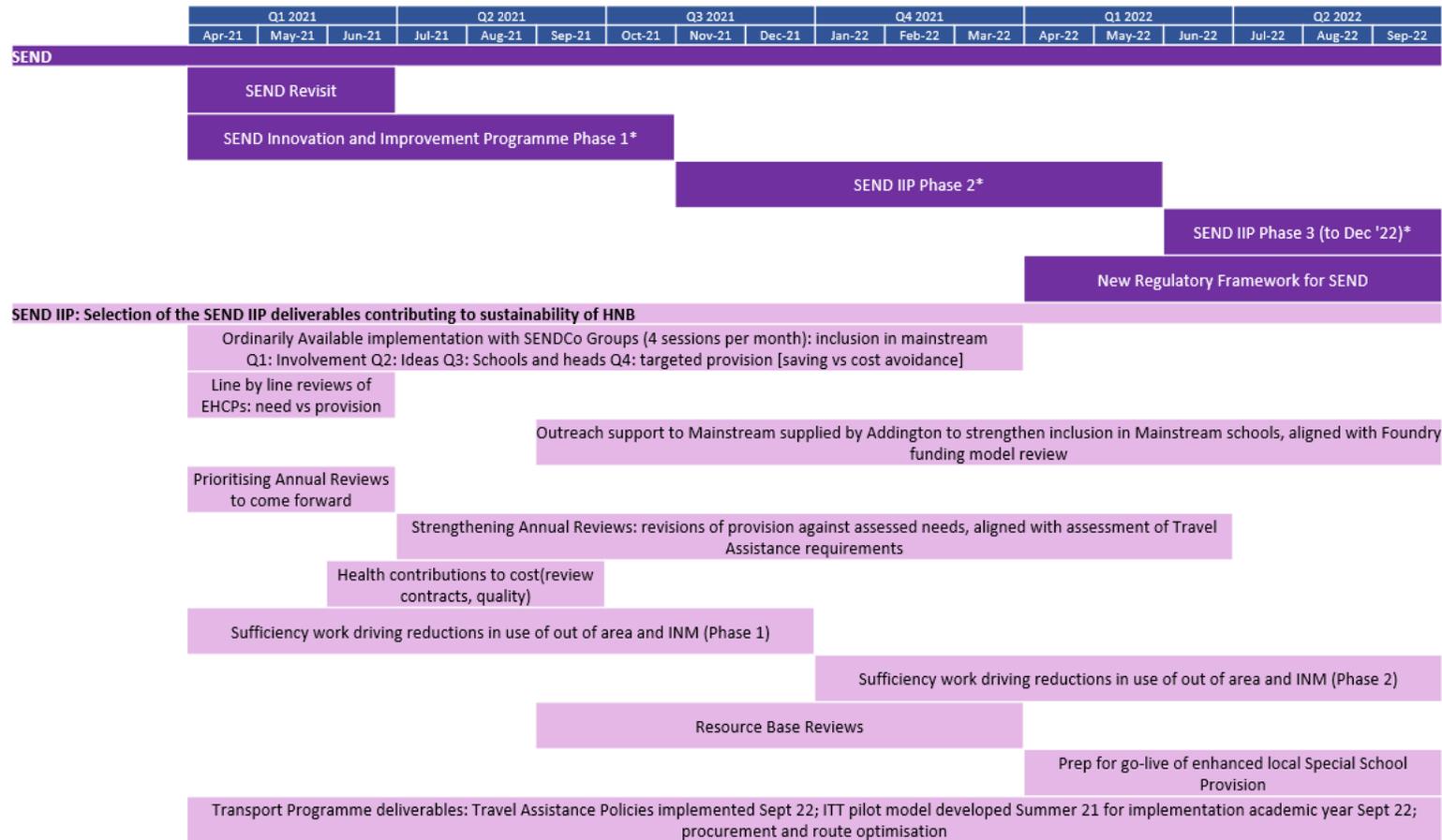
1. Deliver the Actions within their portfolio
2. Unblock barriers, solve problems
3. Flag issues and areas for attention on the behalf of other Working Groups
4. Report on progress and escalate issues to the SIB

Coproduction T&F Group

1 2 3 4

1. Deliver specific Coproduction Actions in the Action Plan
2. Support Working Groups to deliver against their Coproduction Actions

Appendix B – High Level Overview of SEND IIP Timeline (up to Sept '22)



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