CITY OF YORK COUNCIL

Agenda Item 6

York Schools Forum **12th November 2026**

Report of Assistant Director, Education and Skills and the Head of SEND

Title: Update on the Local SEND Reform Plan

Summary

1. This report provides the members of School Forum with an update the Local SEND Reform Plan which was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) for approval in June 2026. The plan has been approved and the first monitoring reports for quarters 1 and 2 were submitted to the DfE on 30th October 2026.

Main Report

2. School Forum needs to be aware that the delivery of the Local SEND Reform Plan is against a context of accelerating pressures on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Following the end of Safety Valve, York is continuing to see a growth in the number of Education, Health and Care plans that it maintains and this creates continuing pressures on the DSG as a whole.

3. This is entirely due to the High Needs Block, which is forecasting an in-year deficit of **£5.3m** (2025/26: £3.2m deficit). The table below sets out the Monitor 2 projections and compares this to the 2025/26 Outturn position.

Dedicated Schools Grant - 2025/26 Outturn & 2026/27 Monitor 2 Projection						
DSG Block	2025/26 Outturn			2026/27 M2 Projection		
	DfE Funding £m	Spend £m	Net £m	DfE Funding £m	Spend £m	Net £m
Schools	41.578	41.655	0.077	42.746	42.746	(0.000)
Central Services	1.801	1.656	(0.145)	1.728	1.494	(0.234)
High Needs	24.672	27.848	3.176	25.433	30.714	5.281
Early Years	28.641	28.790	0.150	34.795	34.481	(0.314)
	96.691	99.948	3.257	104.702	109.434	4.732
DfE Safety Valve	2.000	-	(2.000)			-
	98.691	**99.948**	**1.257**	**104.702**	**109.434**	**4.732**

Balance B/F			(0.592)			0.665
Balance C/F			**0.665**			**5.397**

4. The SEND Reform Plan quarterly monitoring reports submitted to the DfE reflects the M2 projection, including the deficit balance c/f at the end of 2026/27 of £5.4m. The DfE have indicated that they will support LAs financially with SEND deficits in 2026/27. When York's plan was approved by the DfE earlier this month their confirmation letter included the following commitment: *For deficits that arise in 2026/27 and 2027/28, local authorities can expect that we will continue to take an appropriate and proportionate approach, **though it will not be unlimited**. Future support will take into account LAs' successful delivery of their approved Local SEND reform plan, including appropriate use of investment funding to establish an Experts at Hand offer.*

5. Crucial to the successful delivery of the reform plan and securing further support from the DfE is the need for collective ownership of the delivery of the plan, transparent sharing of the impact of actions on the DSG as a whole and a collaborative approach to the implementation of the reforms.

6. For successful delivery School Forum are a crucial element in the governance of the DSG and in providing a system leadership response. The national SEND reforms and the city's SEND reform plan place the emphasis on the importance of a consistent approach to meeting the needs of the vast majority of children with SEND through inclusive mainstream provision. In York we have made changes to the Element 3 top up funding for both mainstream and specialist settings. This increased the top up funding for mainstream to support inclusive mainstream provision. This has created continuing pressures on the DSG as the costs of resourcing individual EHC plans continues to rise. This, coupled with requests for uplifts the banding supporting a plan and an increased use of independent specialist places, creates a continuing pressure as the number of requests for assessment for school age children continues to increase and outpaces the annual increases in the DSG. The 3.1% increase in High Needs funding does not match the 22% increase in EHC plans and the rising complexity of needs and placement costs.

7. We are continuing to see an increase in requests for placements in independent specialist provision. This increases pressure through the cost of the school place and school transport. The main areas of growth are related to primary/secondary transition where we see an increase in requests for specialist provision. This is despite a year on year increase in provision in city through continued investment in Huntington enhanced resource provision, Applefields and commissioning additional places at Danesgate and Inspire. In 2026-27 the projected increase in the costs of external placements is £979k with the largest increases in placements being seen at Lord

Gowthorpe's (average cost per placement £48K), Allerthorpe (average cost per placement £46k) and Becklands (average cost per placement £89K).

8. The implementation of the Experts at Hand offer is one of the ways that national investment in early identification and intervention is being made. This is designed to support mainstream settings to be better able to meet need through bringing specialist support into mainstream to build capacity to address identified needs. In York, our Experts at Hand model is being implemented through the learning support hub and will continue to grow during 2027-28 as additional capacity from speech and language therapists and occupational therapists is added to the support from Educational Psychologists and specialist teachers.

9. Developing collaborative solutions at neighbourhood clusters level is also central to the delivery of our SEND reform plan. Given the financial pressures faced by all schools there is a need to ensure that partnership investment is focused on supporting collaborative working that keeps children in their communities and can be delivered in a sustainable and cost-effective way e.g. the role of specialist inclusion bases in supporting children who struggle to access a traditional school environment. It is not always effective for each individual school to develop this provision but sharing the costs of establishing alternative provision within neighbourhoods could be a focus for pooled resources.

Recommendations

10. The members of School Forum are asked to:

- support the delivery of the local SEND Reform plan.
- assume collective ownership of the High Needs deficit and support actions to mitigate.
- understand the impact of the actions of individual institutions on the DSG and take a system leadership role in providing effective challenge of practices which increase financial pressures on the system as a whole e.g. permanent exclusions or children unable to access suitable in-city provision, increases in Section 19 requests.

Contact Details **Authors:** **Maxine Squire, Assistant Director, Education and Skills** **Victoria Coyle, Head of SEND**	**Chief Officers Responsible for the Report:** **Martin Kelly, Corporate Director, Children and Education**
Email: maxine.squire@york.gov.uk Victoria.coyle@york.gov.uk	Email: martin.kelly@york.gov.uk
For further information please contact the author of the report	