

SLOUGH SCHOOLS FORUM

SCHOOLS GROUP:

John Constable (Chair), Peter Collins, Philip Gregory, Valerie Haffrey, Ray Hinds, Kathleen Higgins, Navroop Mehat, Angela Mellish, Carol Pearce, Kathy Perry, Jon Reekie, Jo Rockall, Jamie Rockman, Coral Snowden, Neil Sykes, Maggie Waller, Nicky Willis and Maxine Wood

OBSERVERS:

Eddie Neighbour and Councillor Martin F. Carter

LOCAL AUTHORITY:

Cate Duffy, Michael Jarrett, Johnny Kyriacou, Mark McCurrie, Neil Wilcox, John Wood and Susan Woodland

**DATE & TIME: THURSDAY, 1ST OCTOBER, 2020 AT 9.00 AM
VIRTUAL**

AGENDA

Supplementary paper: the following paper, under item number 10, has been added to the agenda for the above meeting as it was not available for publication with the rest of the agenda.

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10. High Needs Block Deficit Strategy

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SLOUGH SCHOOLS' FORUM
1st October 2020

Directorate of Children, Learning and Skills

High Needs/SEND Review Update 2020/21

1) PURPOSE OF REPORT

- i) To provide Forum with an update on DSG Management Plan (formerly Recovery Plan).

2) RECOMMENDATIONS

That Forum notes the work underway and the reporting timetable.

3) DSG Management Plan (formerly Recovery Plan)

a) Resource

As reported in July, additional resource was brought in and Mark McCurrie was appointed to lead on the work to develop the DSG Recovery Plan. Mark has since been carrying out data validation work which was reported to the High Needs Working Group on 22nd September.

b) DfE Policy on DSG

In July, I reported the outcome from the LA's meeting with the ESFA and SEND Advisors and our proposals and principles for developing the DSG Recovery Plan which would replace the previous version submitted in 2019.

Since then the DfE has changed its policy on the need for DSG recovery plans. Unfortunately, no announcement was made and the change was contained in the routine guidance on the DSG issued on 24th July, 'DSG: conditions of grant 2020 to 2021',

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2020-to-2021/dsg-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>.

The relevant section reads as follows:

'5.2 Further conditions relating to DSG overspends and deficits

Any local authority that has an overall deficit on its DSG account at the end of the 2019 to 2020 financial year, or whose DSG surplus has substantially reduced during the year, must co-operate with the Department for Education (DfE) in handling that situation. In particular, the local authority must:

1. Provide information as and when requested by the department about its plans for managing its DSG account in the 2020 to 2021 financial year and subsequently.

2. Provide information as and when requested by the department about pressures and potential savings on its high needs budget.
3. Meet with officials of the department as and when they request to discuss the local authority's plans and financial situation.
4. Keep the schools forum regularly updated about the local authority's DSG account and plans for handling it, including high needs pressures and potential savings.

The Secretary of State reserves the right to impose more specific conditions of grant on individual local authorities that have an overall deficit on their DSG account, where he believes that they are not taking sufficient action to address the situation.'

Fundamentally, this change in policy does not obviate the need for us to have a recovery plan but it does indicate that provided we can demonstrate we are taking the appropriate action and have an effective plan in place that they will 'leave us alone'. Of course our progress can be monitored via Schools Forum publications and the annual financial (S251) returns submitted by the LA, but it is intended to provide updates during the regular meetings which held with the Council's DfE SEND Advisor.

As reported to Forum in February there is consensus that the DfE's policy has switched from requiring deficits to be cleared to all LAs having in place robust and sustainable plans in place which demonstrate increased efficiency and alignment of resource to need.

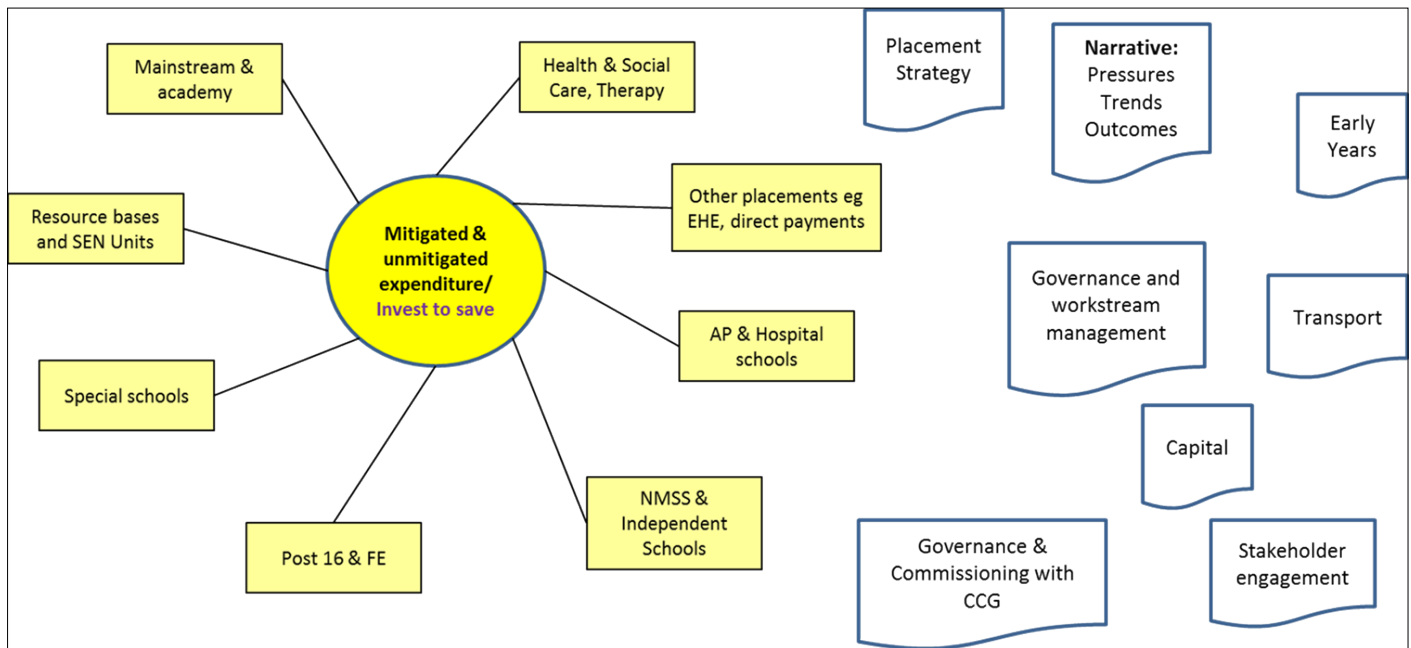
c) DSG Management Plan

- i) On 16th September, the ESFA published a new template for a DSG Management Plan which all LAs have been asked to use. It is intended to replace the previous DSG Recovery Plan and is much more sophisticated than its predecessor.

[Dedicated schools grant \(DSG\) deficit management plan](#)

- ii) Key features:

- To be used for preparing the 21-22 budget
- At least termly submission to Schools Forum
- Intended to operate as a 'living document'
- To be published on the Local Offer and Council websites
- Uses feeds from national sources e.g. population trends, school census, SEN2, previous budgets/S251 returns submitted by LAs
- Sections on health and social care data
- Governance and commissioning arrangements with CCG
- Trends analysis and projections – 'mitigated' and 'unmitigated'
- Spend to save schemes
- Reference to outcomes, care support, therapies,
- Includes proposals for resource bases and SEN units
- SEN Transport
- Records of stakeholder engagement
- Linked SEND Strategy and area plans



iii) Work is underway to understand the implications for resources and data gathering. The new plan will provide the basis for the timetable for the deliver of Slough’s Plan.

iv) Governance

The development of the plan and generation of the 2021-22 budget will be managed by the High Needs Working Group with regular reports being submitted to Schools Forum (see timetable below), to the SEND Partnership Board and to members as required. The working group is expected to be operating at least until the March Schools Forum meeting.

Once completed, but in line with the publication of Schools Forum DSG reports, the DSG Management Plan will be published on the Local Offer and Council websites.

v) Timetable -

Date	Event	Outcome
22 nd September	HN Working Group	Policy and timetable – implications & planning
1st October	Schools Forum	Update on policy changes, DSG Management Plan timetable
October	meetings with schools as required	
15 th October	HN Working Group	Discuss historical spend analysis, trends, projections,
11 th November	HN Working Group	Review draft management plan, feedback from schools, stakeholders
2nd December	Schools Forum	Share draft management plan, with changes, impact, and benefits
17 th December	HN Working Group	Review 21-22 budget and discussion for draft 3 year DSG plan
19th January 2021	Schools Forum	21-22 budget and draft 3 Year plan, and impact of proposed changes
10th March	Schools Forum	Confirmation of Schools Budgets 2021/22
13 th May	Schools Forum	Update paper for 3 year plan

d) **Current Activities**

The following activities are underway and will provide the baseline data for the new plan and will be reviewed at the next two working group meetings:

- i) Analysis of historical ESFA data on DSG expenditure performance
- ii) Benchmarking against regional and statistical neighbours
- iii) Monitoring of trends in need – [a lot of nationally available data is already available and the key trends are well known e.g. rise in prevalence of ASD]
- iv) Review of current internal financial reporting mechanisms to test accuracy of management information – both for internal use and for submission to the ESFA via S251 returns.
- v) Analysis of current placement costs for commissioned places across all sectors
- vi) Bespoke analysis of specialist provision specifically resource bases – complete the RB review.
- vii) Case audits to support ‘6’
- viii) Cost benchmarking to support the above
- ix) Identification and development of opportunities for achieving savings and efficiencies
- x) Review of banding system
- xi) During October, meetings will be held with schools.

John Wood
 23rd September 2020
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