

Appendix C: Suggestions on how the financial pressures in the high needs block can best be addressed.

There is no short-term answer and the growth in pressure on high needs blocks is a local and national issue. There are four suggestions, all of which have some work already underway, but we believe require a renewed focus and plan for short-term investment as to secure a reduction in pressure in the medium/long term:

- *Outcome-focussed and outward-looking commissioning to support mainstream schools with inclusion*
- *Specialist hubs to bridge the gap between mainstream and special – run by special schools, operating within mainstream schools*
- *A medium-term sufficiency strategy to accept and plan for the pressure/growth we know will continue in our existing special schools*
- *An innovative and open-minded partnership approach to creating more provision for complex pupils who will otherwise end up in high-cost independent places – through social care needs as well as educational*

We would suggest more investment in pre EHCP provision for those children on the EHCP assessment pathways rather than transferring 1.5% from the Schools Block.

If, however, the 1.5% is taken from the high needs block to the schools block, could we use this to increase the % of Element 2 (Notional SEND budget allocation) in all schools?

Alternatively use the 1.5% to increase the % of Element 2 (Notional SEND budget allocation) in for those schools that have a % of SEND that tracks significantly above national figures and has done for an agreed period of time. The % above national and length of time could be determined by Schools Forum.

As per Growing Schools Funding it could be that we keep the 1.5% within the Schools Block, but ring-fence it for schools to apply for additional funding to support disproportionate SEND growth. This approach would ensure that only those schools with substantial additional pressure were eligible to access the funding. This could be considered as a Graduated Response Annual Payment (GRAP) and would be limited to 3 terms, before re-application requests had to made by each school that had accessed it.

These options could lead to a more pro-active approach to supporting children ahead of EHCPs and could lead to fewer children requiring an EHCP assessment and therefore reduce the financial pressures on the High Needs Block, as fewer ECHPs may need issuing. We would also advocate using the 1.5% towards activities that 'reduce exclusion', as this is currently both a key concern for all schools across the LA and at significant cost, particularly when pupils have to access alternative provision. The support currently in place for schools to manage pupils at risk of PX is in need of further investment and is currently not yet fit for purpose, in order to have the level of impact which would result in savings made in the long term.

Continue to seek and develop educational services that serve the needs of the young people in Rotherham and from within Rotherham rather than them having to be met outside of the bounds of authority which can be very expensive and may lack the quality of provision we would demand.

RMBC should provide a true breakdown high needs block accounts so that we can see what the shortfall is. Also provide indicative budgets showing projections if % contributions were increased. How would this affect school budgets and High Needs Funding per pupil?