

Budget Management Activities for SEND Pressures

Inclusion Fund 2025/26

1. The inclusion fund was included in the 15-year deficit recovery plan as a concept, with proposals to be developed in 2024/25 in consultation with headteachers.
2. A budget of £1.2m has been included for 2025/26. The amount has been finalised based on the decision of Schools Forum in January 2025 to permit the transfer to high needs of surplus school block funding. The surplus is the balance available after all mainstream schools have been allocated funding according to the national funding formula (NFF) in full and a central pupil growth fund has been provided.
3. The DfE did not permit a higher level of transfer to fully fund the inclusion fund proposals that had been drawn up in consultation with headteachers and presented to Schools Forum over the autumn. The inclusion fund has been scaled back accordingly.
4. As a result of the decreased level of funding, schools were consulted on which aspects of the inclusion fund to take forward at the Head Teacher Forum on 26 February 2025. After discussion at this event and further feedback from the online invitation, it was agreed to take the following options forward:
 - a. £550,000 for provision of additional specialist outreach support for mainstream schools.
 - b. £270,000 for a pilot of three inclusion advisor posts to work with a decided patch of mainstream schools to trial their impact over the next year.
 - c. £380,000 to deliver training and development support to mainstream schools as set out in original proposals and enabling schools to choose which option would be more impactful for them in supporting their pupils with high needs.
5. Processes are now underway to enable implementation of these elements from September 2025, with an impact review to then take place in 2026/27 to assess the difference made from these support elements being in place.

Outreach Plus

6. Outreach plus is a group of services to support mainstream schools in establishing resourced provision as part of the delivery of the SEND sufficiency programme of work. The aim of this work is to increase the availability of places for children with an EHCP.
7. The council is working with special school headteachers to agree a package of support that will enable mainstream school headteachers to establish resourced provision under the advice and guidance of specialist staff.
8. Building on round one of the sufficiency programme, which has enabled more children with an EHCP to remain in mainstream provision, round two is focused on commissioning resourced provision in mainstream primary and secondary schools for children with autism spectrum condition and social, emotional and mental health needs.
9. In applying the learning from round one, services to support our mainstream school headteachers are vital to ensure our newly commissioned resourced provision operate as inclusive models that enrich the entire school community by valuing diversity, promoting individualised learning, enhancing staff expertise, and embedding a culture of inclusion and belonging.

Service aims and objectives

10. The overall aim is to provide specialist advice and support to BCP mainstream schools to enhance their skills and expertise to effectively meet the requirements of children with additional needs.
11. The service aims to:
 - Provide specialist advice and guidance to mainstream schools
 - Provide training and guidance to mainstream schools
 - Increase opportunities for children and young people with additional needs to reach their academic potential within mainstream schools
 - Promote effective practice in meeting the needs of all children and young people
12. The service objectives are:
 - To improve provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND enabling schools to provide the right place at the right time and with the right support
 - To improve confidence and capacity to meet special educational needs in local mainstream schools
 - Preventing schools from being SEN magnet schools, widening the distribution of provision available for children and families
 - To develop inclusive environments and develop expertise in mainstream schools
 - To provide children and young people with SEND with equitable educational opportunities alongside their peers
 - To review the data and information to inform future service planning.
 - To use collated data and information to determine the financial impact of the service.

Service Description

13. The service will provide targeted support, advice, guidance and training to mainstream primary and secondary schools seeking to develop resourced provision. The service will be allocated to schools who form part of round two of the SEND sufficiency programme of work and appropriate support will be provided following an initial audit of each school and associated proposal.
14. Accessibility: Access to the service will be through round two of the SEND sufficiency programme. The special school will audit the maintained school's proposal for the development of the Resourced Provision to assess the scope of work.
15. Population covered: The service will work with learners in mainstream education settings covering the primary and secondary age range.
16. Interdependence with other service providers: The service provider will be expected to work in collaboration with the SEND local area partnership which includes local authority officers, relevant health professionals, local schools, teaching school hubs and other local providers.
17. The service will provide a formalised package of support for a maximum period of one year and will assist mainstream school headteachers in the following areas:

- Curriculum
- Planning
- Assessment
- Environment
- Sensory
- Timetabling
- Resource advice
- Staff training
- In-reach / observations
- Consultancy

18. Year 1 Support Programme

Duration: 2 Terms

- Initial meeting following submission of request for support, what is already in place, what support the school has identified?
- Allocation of senior leader & team - mainstream school & Linwood
- Planning meeting to look at student need – EHCPs / outside agency reports / IEPs etc
- Areas of focus established & UP3 expert teachers allocated
- Support schedule drawn up, half termly review points set

Duration: 1 Term

- Planning for areas to develop further, growth & succession
- Support schedule drawn up, half termly review points set

19. Year 2 – Individual school takes responsibility for training and development of staff

20. Providers of the Service: The council will commission special schools in BCP to provide the support to local mainstream primary and secondary schools.

Financial implications of outreach plus

21. Round two is expected to deliver a total of 20 projects over at least two academic years (depending on the scale of individual projects). This could provide a total of between 160 places – 240 places depending on a range of between 8-12 place provisions.
22. The cost of a support package for each school is a maximum of £20,000 which necessitates a total budget of £0.4m over a 2-year period. This covers the costs of outreach teachers/backfilling, training, site visits, initial audit and assess, plan, do review approach. It is planned that the cost is met from the 2024/25 unused mainstream schools funding transferred to high needs. Only £0.5m has been spent of the £1.3m transfer due the delay in finalising proposals for the inclusion fund.
23. The table below sets out that the impact of the cost of the service on the cost per place in year one. It shows a year one additional cost of £2,500 based on an 8-place provision. This brings the total cost per place for resourced provision to £25,500 based on an 8-place provision. The costs per place decrease for provisions based on 10 and 12 places. The year 2 costs reduce to £22,000 per place as outreach plus is for one year only. This is a cost avoidance of £3,000 per place taking an estimated cost of a special school place of £25,000.

Year 1	Cost per place £	8 Places £	10 Places £	12 Places £
Element 1, 2 and 3 funding	22,000	176,000	220,000	264,000
Running Costs	1,000	8,000	10,000	12,000
Year 1 costs	23,000	184,000	230,000	276,000
Cost of outreach per school and per place	20,000	2,500	2,000	1,667
Cost of provision based on 8, 10, 12 places		186,500	232,000	277,667
Cost per place including the cost of outreach		25,500	25,000	24,667

Year 2	Cost per place £	8 Places £	10 Places £	12 Places £
Element 1, 2 and 3 funding	22,000	176,000	220,000	264,000
Cost per place		22,000	22,000	22,000

Special School Banding Review

24. The current funding system for special schools in BCP Council has been in place in largely the same format since the formation of the unitary authority in April 2019.
25. Up to 2022/23 there was a wider variety of funded bands across the five special schools – a mixture of legacy council agreements and BCP ‘add-ons’.
26. In 2023/24, additional funding from the minimum funding guarantee was fed into the bottom of the bands to start bringing minimum funding more in line with the top up funding available in a mainstream school.
27. Ad hoc arrangements that make individual payments up to double some of the top band amounts are currently in place.
28. Special schools have maintained a dialogue with the council for a number of years that current budgets are insufficient to deliver the provision they need to support the children attending their school and that a different system is required to update and recognise current positions.
29. Financially, the five special schools are in differing positions with some holding a financial surplus, and others holding a deficit or projected to be soon in deficit.
30. A benchmarking exercise was carried out by Bath and North-East Somerset across 11 Council Areas in the southwest, based on 2023/24 banding rates paid to special schools in their areas.
31. This exercise established that based on the figures provided, BCP pay the highest banding rate for children requiring the least amount of support i.e. the minimum top up amount provided, at an average of £12,084 per child. Band values in other

councils range from £1,780 to £12,084, with the average value being £4,606 and the median at £2,538.

32. In relation to the maximum top up amount provided, BCP pay the third highest banding rate for children requiring the most amount of support at an average of £25,853 per child. For this element, values ranged from £13,265 to £29,490, with an average value of £21,845 and a median of £22,734.
33. It should be noted that for both minimum and maximum amounts this does not include any additional top up that councils may award on an ad hoc basis.
34. A meeting was held with special school headteachers and academy trust representatives in May 2025 to present the findings to date and discuss next steps to move the position forwards with a stated aim of being able to implement a new model for September 2025.
35. It was agreed to proceed with modelling the proposed new system on the split 'place' and 'child' costs and to establish a banding approach that would fit consistently across all schools. The place element establishes costs applicable to all special schools equally (such as a headteacher) and then attributes school specific elements (such as provision being across multiple locations). The result is then turned into a per place cost with reference to the number of commissioned places so each school's per place cost will be different. The child element is then differentiated for each band level depending on pupil needs and is the same across all schools. The two elements added together for each school will become the top up band funding as pupils are placed. This method means that each school will continue to have unique band funding at each level but the reasons for differentiation will be understood, which is not currently the case. It will also enable a move away from requests for additional ad hoc requests for funding.
36. This approach has recently been implemented by Dorset Council and their framework will be reviewed to determine suitability for BCP in consultation with the headteachers. If agreed the next steps will be to then map existing pupils to the new band descriptions. This will need to be completed before the summer break so the financial implications can be assessed before consultation and agreement of proposals takes place in the autumn.

Early years assessment centres - Dingley's promise - £0.6m annual fixed term investment

37. Dingley's Promise provide tailored nursery support to children under five with SEND. The children they work with have a wide range of additional needs including cognitive delay, autism, physical disabilities, genetic conditions and life-limiting conditions.
38. Dingley's Promise has a proven track record with seven centres nationally. It is a new approach within early years, with priority given to high quality inclusive practice, early intervention, and prevention. The aim is to identify and address children's needs at an early stage to reduce the need for more specialised educational settings. The first centre opened in May 2024 in Bournemouth attached to a family hub, with two further assessment centres commissioned for Christchurch and Poole to meet the escalating need. The initial proposal was shared with Schools Forum and the SEND Programme Board.
39. Dingley's Promise operates as a limited company with registered charity status. It is an established, experienced organisation with a strong, positive history for supporting early years children with SEND. The organisation has three long established Ofsted registered centres in Berkshire and more recently has been

commissioned by the Hampshire, Reading, Woking, and Gloucester Councils. Information can be found in the link [Our Centres - Dingley's Promise](#)

40. The commissioned cost is £200,000 per year, for each centre funded from the high needs block. The setting is funded for the hours children attend through the early years single funding formula in the normal way. This funding varies according to the age of the children with the £200,000 for the additional support.
41. The service has worked on a conservative estimate that 8 out of 50 pupils using each centre go on to avoid a specialist placement. This represents cost avoidance of up to £60,000 per pupil annually, the year after they move on. Payback on the initial investment should occur by year two with the potential for annual cost avoidance of £1.44m by year four and cumulative net cost avoidance over the four years of £2.3m by year four (£2.1m if the contract is extended to include that year). However, the service hope to be more impactful.
42. The financial assessment per centre at the point of commissioning the service for the first time was as follows:

Financial Assessment per centre	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Commissioned Service Cost (£000s)	200	200	200	
Pupils avoiding specialist placement*	8	16	24	
Annual cost avoidance (£000s)		(480)	(960)	(1,440)
Annual net cost/saving (£000s)	200	(280)	(760)	(1,440)
Cumulative net cost/ saving (£000's)	200	(80)	(840)	(2,280)

* Cumulative as new cohort impacted each year

Impact data presented to the SEND Programme Board

43. 80% of the children in the first cohort (16 out of 20) at the Bournemouth centre who were on a trajectory to specialist provision have successfully started reception in a mainstream school rather than specialist, with a cost avoidance of a minimum of £25,000 per child per year (based on maintained and academy specialist costing) totalling £400,000 for the 2024 – 2025 academic year. More detailed tracking of these children will take place to give a more accurate net cost avoidance figure.
44. As the confidence from parents grows the service has seen a reduction in parental EHC needs assessment requests at nursery age from an average of 13 a month before the new year, to 1 a month since January 2025.
45. Requests for support from this service are high and come via the weekly multi agency triage meetings and partners have expressed confidence with the system.
46. The original centre was commissioned to work with 50 families but within the first year they have tripled the number of families they have supported.
47. The centre in Bournemouth has already seen over 200 children and young people benefit from its support since opening in May 2024.

48. Furthermore, 98% of families supported by the Bournemouth centre also say they feel more confident and positive about the future as a result of the signposting, advice and help of our outreach service.

Post 19 Initiatives

49. Of the 4737 children and young people in BCP Council with an EHCP, 1034 are aged 16 – 25 (this breaks down to 857 16 – 19-year-olds in school year groups 12 to 14 and 182 adults aged 20 – 25 post school). If all of the young people currently in Years 12 – 14 stays on in education (therefore requiring a continued use of their EHCP) then there will be a continued growth in the number of adults being supported through their EHCP.
50. It is important for the service to have a better understanding of this cohort, their needs and whether these are being best served through continued education or not. Following this a number of service developments are required which are outlined below.
51. The service will develop strong independent advice and guidance processes to ensure that all young people in Year 11 have an options appraisal in place that effectively evaluates the different routes to ambitious and meaningful employment, rather than solely relying on continued education which may not always lead to progression into employment.
52. The service is currently working to grow its supported internships offer, which is a strong and well-run model, and needs to reach more young people.
53. The service will work closely with Bournemouth and Poole College to ensure that those learners who need a further education qualification as their next step are able to do so through the college rather than an alternative provider.
54. The service will work with local employers to develop their confidence to be able to employ young people with SEND and to understand the huge benefits that this can bring to their businesses.

Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) and Use of Alternative Provision (AP)

55. Education otherwise than at school means all forms of education that take place outside the formal school environment and meet the specific needs of children who cannot attend a mainstream or special school.
56. Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, for any reason (illness, exclusion or otherwise), cannot receive such education unless those arrangements are made. This duty is often referred to as the “s.19 duty”.
57. S19 EOTAS is usually a short-term response to particular circumstances, and any arrangements made by the LA will normally be temporary. Pupil referral units (PRUs), hospital schools, AP and home school tutors are all examples. This duty applies whether or not a child is on roll at a school and irrespective of the type of school they attend. It is for the LA to decide what education provision is suitable and includes all children with or without SEND.
58. Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014, when discussing EOTAS, allows local authorities to arrange for special educational provision for children and young people outside of traditional school or post-16 settings. This provision

can only be made if the authority is satisfied that it would be inappropriate to provide education in a school or post-16 institution.

59. S 61 is often not a short term or temporary solution to a specific circumstance. It follows a decision by the LA often after an EHC needs assessment or annual review, based on the current and foreseeable needs of the child or young person, that special educational provision in a school would not be appropriate.
60. The number of children and young people in EOTAS has risen considerably over the last year. S19 has risen from 63 children in May 2024 to 136 children in March 2025. S61 has risen from 49 to 81. When broken down by age range there is a significant pressure in the older age range from Year 9. The greatest primary need is social, emotional, mental health (SEMH) followed by autistic spectrum condition (ASC), which matches the two highest areas of need in the overall cohort of all children with SEND. Too many children are in S19 for too long despite this being planned as a short period of intervention.
61. The delivery of the Sufficiency Strategy aims to address the number of children in AP who are there due to a lack of spaces in special school provision. However, there are other actions that the service is taking in relation to this cohort which are detailed below.
62. EOTAS is the first area of focus for an Education Quality Assurance thematic review, with a spotlight on:
 - a. 10% each of the Section 19 and 61 children and young people receiving EOTAS
 - b. Quality of the LA decision (to agree EOTAS) and compliance with the legislation and the evidence to support why EOTAS was the only solution (rather than a setting) for each child /young person
 - c. Quality of the curriculum
 - d. Timeliness of amending the EHCP to reflect EOTAS
 - e. What arrangements are put in place to monitor /report on progress at the point EOTAS agreed
 - f. What plans are in place for re-integration into a setting
63. Furthermore, an early review of priority placements to ensure appropriateness in relation to those over 6 months and the Post 16 cohort for s19. The service has also commenced an Inclusion Panel (focus on Alternative Provision) for robust decision-making.
64. At a strategic level, the service is developing a three tier Alternative Provision model which aims to reduce the number of children in AP, and for those that require it, the length of time that they are in AP. This will be particularly important for the cohort on S19. Alongside this the service is developing plans to work with schools to reduce the number of permanent exclusions, which has the knock-on effect of children spending time in AP.

Funding Processes

65. A piece of work has taken place to explore health-related spend within the high needs block. Whilst there has been clarity about what Health cannot fund, there have not always been clear links between the EHCP process and the continuing health care process, agreeing needs and identifying who is responsible for meeting them.

66. Child level data was used to identify 58 children who have received health services, where there may be a need to recoup funding from Health that has been paid from the high needs block.
67. The next steps are to ascertain likely amount of cost recoupment relating to these children and create an effective system going forward for tripartite funding. In the meantime, the Multi-Agency Resource Panel has been re-started, with engagement from Adults and Children's Social Care and Health colleagues. This will ensure joined up decision making going forward.