

Delegated Decision

23 February 2023

Setting the budget for The Woodlands, Pupil Referral Unit, incorporating Education Health Needs 2023-24



Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service

Electoral division(s) affected:

All

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To set out the methodology and proposed budget plan for The Woodlands Pupil Referral Unit, including the Education Health Care Needs Team.

Executive summary

- 2 The proposed budget for The Woodlands, incorporating pupils from the Educational Health Care Needs Team, has been developed based on place numbers multiplied by estimated place costs.
- 3 A budget has been proposed for The Woodlands and was agreed virtually by the SEND and Inclusion Resources Board (SIRB) in February 2023. This needs to be formally agreed via a delegated decision report.
- 4 The budget proposal has been compiled alongside the school leadership team to ensure that the full impact of these additional delegated duties have been considered.

Recommendation(s)

- 5 That the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services as decision maker, approves the proposed methodology and budget plan for The Woodlands Pupil Referral Unit.

Background

- 6 The cost of running The Woodlands PRU (incorporating EHN) is largely funded from the High Needs Block.
- 7 The EHN Team were incorporated into the Woodlands from September 2021 as numbers being supported by this team had grown significantly

and there has continued to be high demand for this service after the COVID pandemic.

- 8 A significant increase in the demand for EHN places increased numbers from 180 on point of transfer to 240 by the start of summer term 2022 and this was reflected in the budget for 2022-23.

Budget allocations

- 9 In December 2022 the Department for Education (DfE) confirmed additional HNB funding of £3.567 million for 2023/24. One condition of this additional grant funding was that Pupil Referral Unit funding should increase by a minimum of 3.4% in comparison with 2022/23 funding levels.
- 10 The Q3 forecast outturn against budget for 2022/23 is that the PRU element of the budget is forecast to overspend by c.£0.400 million, offset by an underspend forecast of c.£0.200 million on the EHN element of the budget.
- 11 In terms of setting the budget for 2023/24 it is proposed to retain the same place numbers and to increase the funding allocation per place by 3.4% thus meeting the conditions of grant. The table below shows the proposed budget for 2023/24:

Provision type	Places	Allocation per place	Budget 2023/24
Broom Cottages	75	£20,680	£1,551,000
Bridge placements	30	£10,340	£310,200
Alternative provision (off-site)	150	£31,020	£4,653,000
Education Health Needs	240	£10,340	£2,481,600
Total	495		£8,995,800

- 12 Discussions have been held with the Headteacher of The Woodlands and it is considered the budget above will provide sufficient funding provide the service for 2023/24.
- 13 A significant piece of work has been undertaken over recent months to create a chart of accounts structure for The Woodlands that will provide better quality analysis of financial performance for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 14 As we move through next year, it will become clearer whether the allocations per place are an accurate and appropriate reflection of the funding required to deliver the provision.

- 15 The Woodlands continue to be supported by CYPS in the quality assurance aspects of Alternative Provision used by all schools. The focus of this work has been safeguarding and supporting the assurance of value for money from placements.

Conclusion

- 16 It is essential that The Woodlands is appropriately funded to support the challenging nature of its work and new areas of responsibility which have been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.
- 17 The school must be supported to retain standards and its status as an Ofsted 'Good' school. In Local Authorities where the Pupil Referral Units have been found to be inadequate, the academy orders have left councils in a difficult position in influencing pupil place planning with a Multi Academy Trust deciding the pupil admission limit for the school. This often results in reduced capacity to support vulnerable young people and consequently, an over reliance on high-cost alternative provision placements which place unnecessary pressures on the High Needs Block.
- 18 This budget revision with the Woodlands is part of a wider programme of activities that have been scoped to ensure that additional income opportunities and expenditure reductions support the wider HNB sustainability programme.

Background papers

Other useful documents

- None.

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

For permanent exclusions, Local Authorities must **provide suitable full-time education** to permanently excluded pupils from the 6th day of exclusion under section 19 Education Act 1996.

Pupil referral units also (PRUs) teach children who aren't able to attend school and may not otherwise receive suitable education. This could be because they have a short- or long-term illness, have been excluded or are a new starter waiting for a mainstream school place. These budget proposals take into consideration these wider responsibilities and quality of the curriculum offered.

Finance

Funding for The Woodland is provided from Durham's High Needs Block allocation. A five-year sustainability plan for the HNB was agreed by Cabinet in April 2022 and is regularly updated. The figures shown in the report are included in the latest version of the plan.

Consultation

Information on the proposals was shared virtually with members of the SEND and Inclusion Resources Board.

The proposals were discussed and approved with the Portfolio Holder for CYPS in February 2023 with Jim Murray, Head of Education & Skills.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Increased funding will help to secure appropriate provision for vulnerable children and young people with protected characteristics.

Climate Change

Increased funding may help to reduce the need for pupils to travel to access provision out of the area, reducing the contribution of CO2 emissions and climate change.

Human Rights

Increased funding will support the right for all children to receive a good education.

Crime and Disorder

Increased funding will support vulnerable children and young people with inclusion needs in achieving their best outcomes in life. Early intervention and support for vulnerable children and young people with additional needs, should have a positive impact on crime and disorder by helping to prevent offending and / or reoffending.

Staffing

The proposals will support increased staffing costs for the Woodlands and maintain the current team operating within the HCN team. The nature of employment (casual and short-term contracts) within this team means that any significant changes to staffing structures can be managed without any real ER/VR considerations.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

From September 2022, schools which have not been deemed 'Good' according to Ofsted, in either of their last two inspections, they may be issued with an academy order. As mentioned in the report, if the Woodlands was to fall into this position, the council would still have responsibility for permanently excluded pupils but less influence on placement sufficiency. Ensuring that the school is appropriately funded and commissioned appropriately to work in line with the needs of CYPS will mitigate against this risk.

Procurement

None.