

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 19th MARCH 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

DBV UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Forum on the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme.
- 1.2 To notify the forum that an application was made the DFE in December 2023 for the DBV grant and the LA found out in February 2024 they had been successful in securing the £1 million grant.

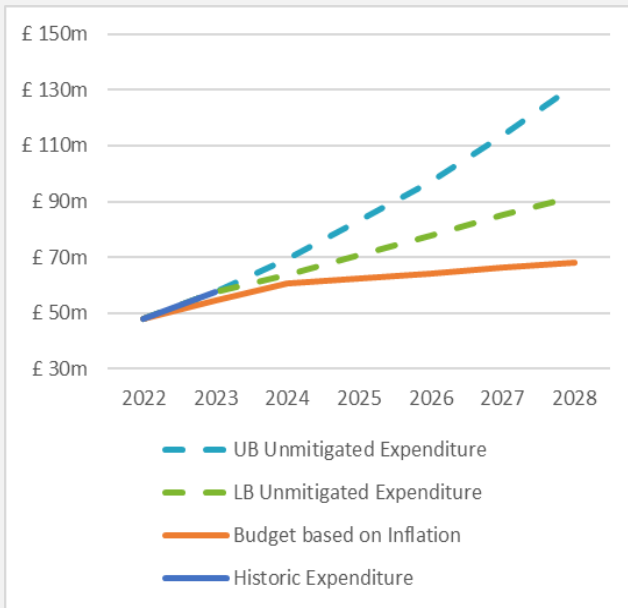
2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The DBV Programme's main objective has been to identify local and national opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The programme has designed its support through two key approaches:
 1. Short term support: To identify sustainable changes in each Local Authority that can drive high-quality outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and to support Wirral in building an evidence-based grant application to assist the implementation of those changes.
 2. Informing Long Term Reform: Build an objective evidence base across a third of the sector, which can be used to:
 - Inform future policy and drive legislative and funding changes
 - Build a national playbook and share best practice
 - Inform future national programmes of similar scale and intent
- 2.2 The local area commenced the DBV programme in June 2023 with colleagues from across the partnership working to compile all the relevant data sets that were required to capture a clear picture in relation to the current challenges faced in the high needs block. In addition, deep dives and root cause analysis took place to understand the areas of focus that could be identified.
- 2.3 Wirral completed the DBV programme alongside 54 other local authorities currently facing challenges in their high needs block costs.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

- 3.1 The DBV programme analysed all data captured in relation to unit costs of provision type and the amount of provision being utilised. In addition, the DBV programme outlined the cost pressures ahead if no steps we taken.

Caseload is driving an unmitigated expenditure growth of between 91%-175% over the next 5 years



The assumption of 6.2% of all CYPs being supported by HNB funding by 2028 makes UB expenditure **44% greater than LB forecasted expenditure** by 2028

Table 1

3.2 Table 1 articulates the unmitigated forecast outlining the challenge of caseload growth. The difference between the upper and lower bound is based on the proportion of the population with an EHCP.

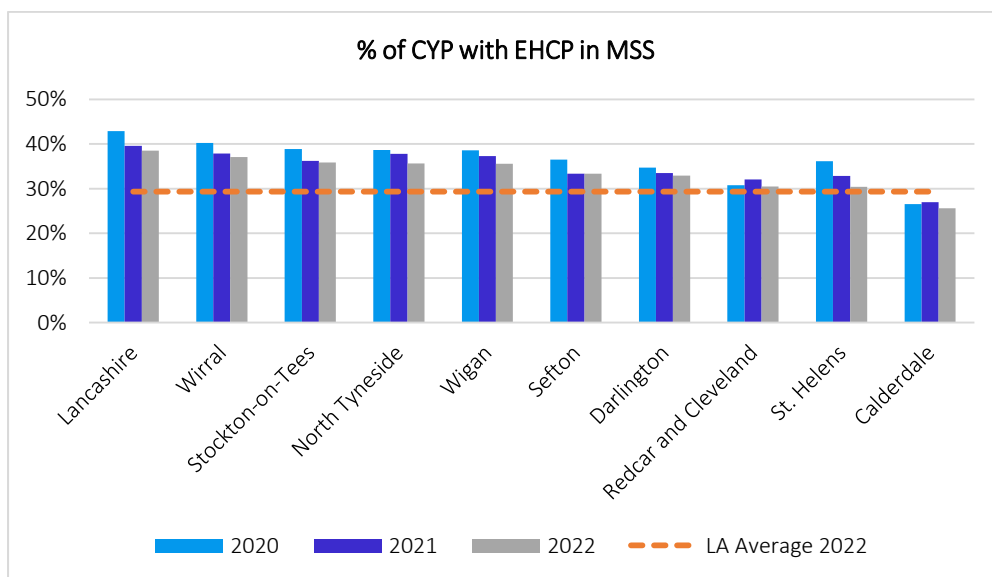


Table 2

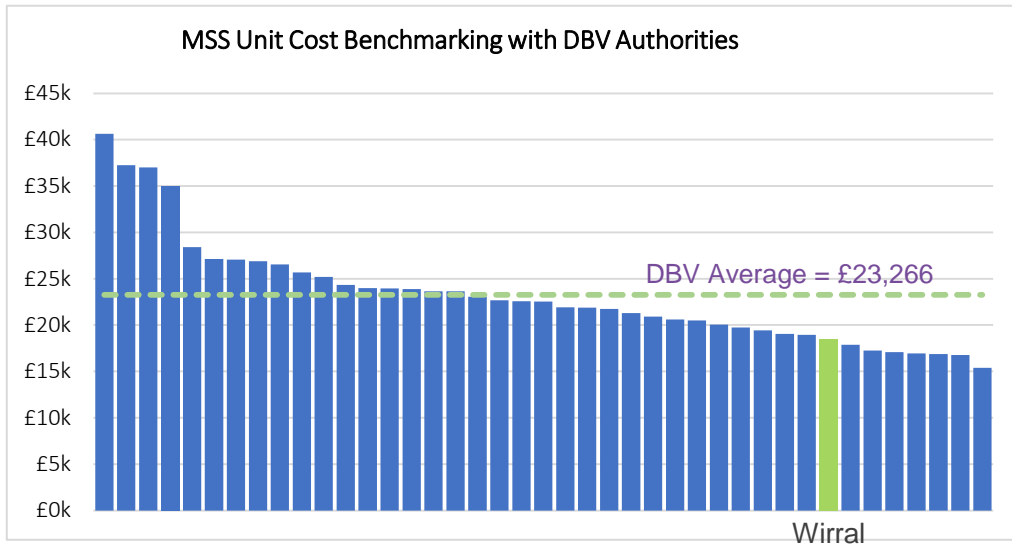


Table 3

3.3 Tables 2 and 3 outline the unit cost and proportion of young people in maintained special schools on Wirral. The proportion of young people with an EHCP on Wirral in a special school is above the national average of 30%, with the Wirral figure being closer to 38 and the second highest compared to statistical neighbours. In relation to unit cost, Wirral is below the DBV average of £23,266 at a figure of around 18K.

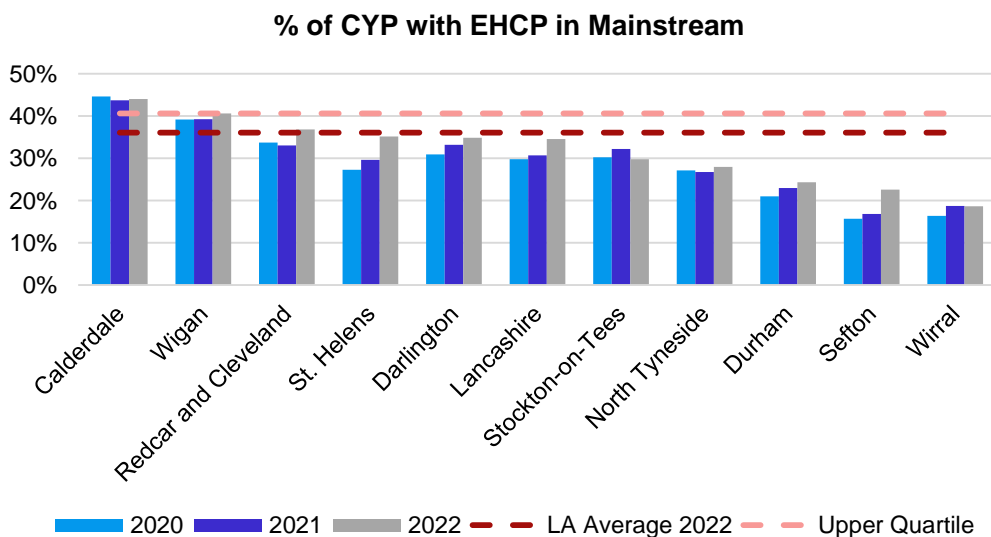


Table 4

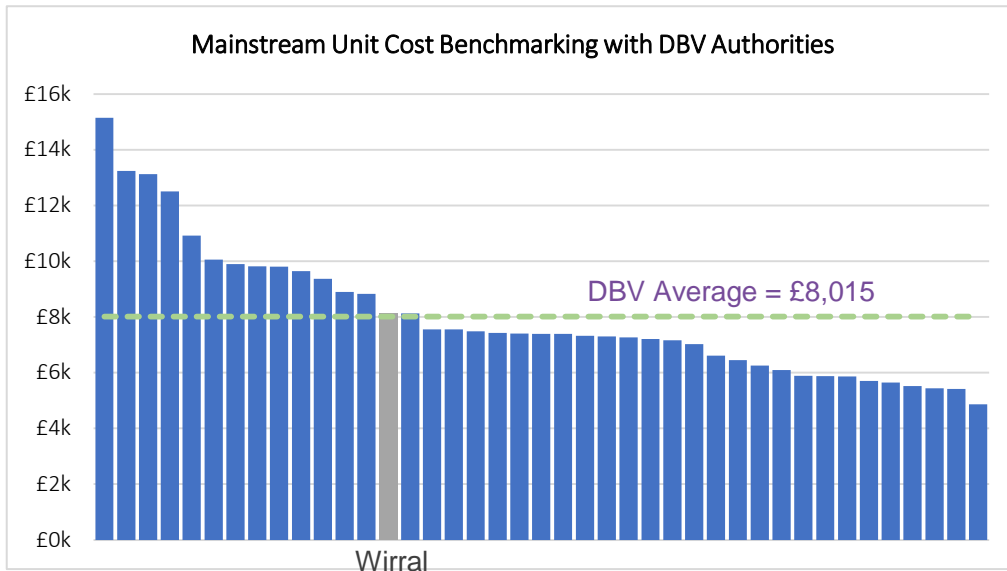


Table 5

3.4 In tables 4 and 5 you will see the unit cost and the proportion of young people with an EHCP in a mainstream provision. In relation of proportion of EHCP's in a mainstream provision, Wirral is below the national average figure of 38%, with proportion of young people with an EHCP in mainstream standing at 19%, this is the lowest in comparison to statistical neighbours. In relation to unit cost, the Wirral is almost identical to the DBV average at £8K.

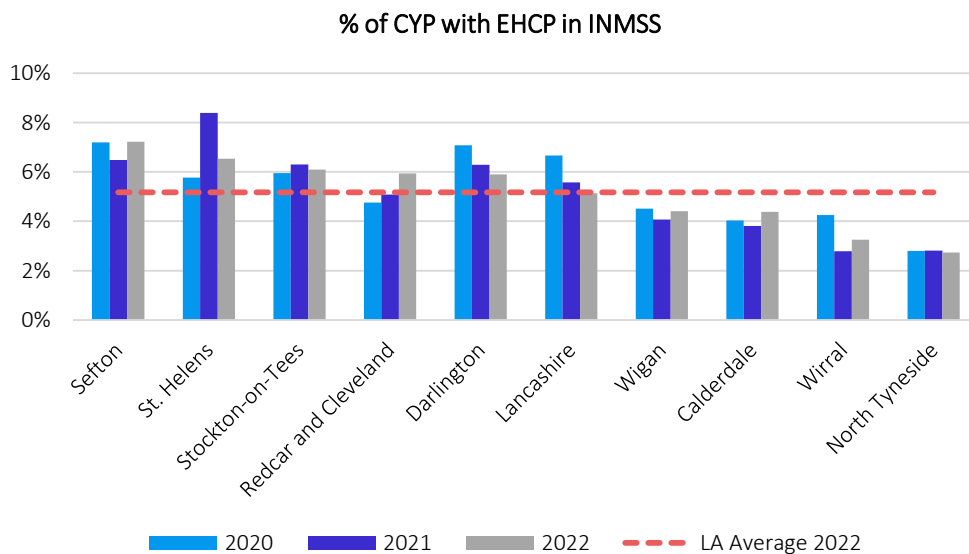


Table 6

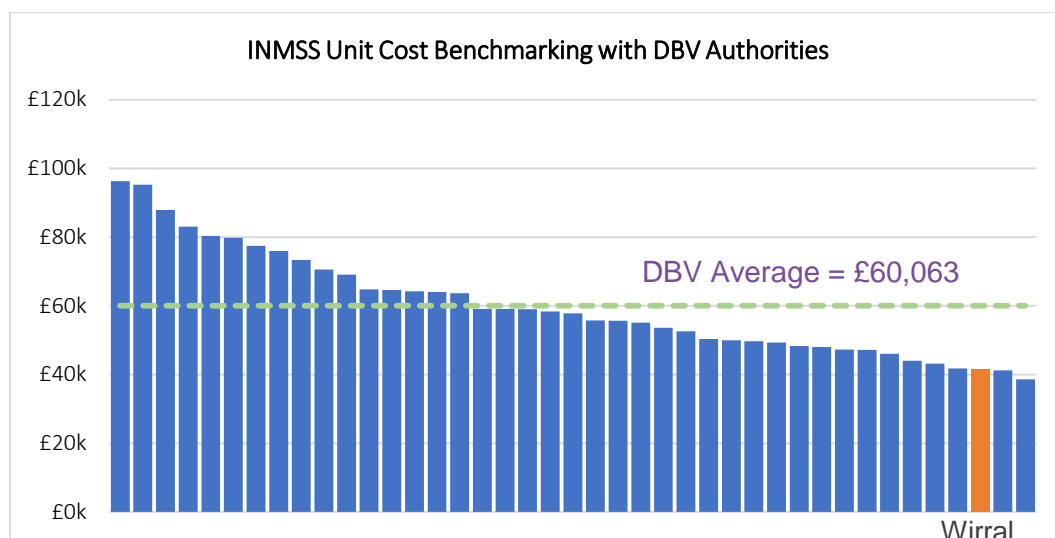


Table 7

3.5 In relation to tables 6 and 7 it can be seen the proportion of young people with an EHCP accessing an Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) is below the national average of about 5.8% at about 3.5% on Wirral. This is also one of lower amounts when compared to statistical neighbours. In relation to unit cost, Wirral is significantly lower than the DBV average of £60K at around 40K. As outlined in other reports, as the maintained special school system reaches saturation the requirement for using INMSS will increase over the next 5 years putting significant pressure on the high needs block.

3.6 Following the work by DBV to articulate unit costs and the proportion of young people attending different provisions with an EHCP, Newton Europe undertook a deep dive to articulate the key areas of focus that would support young people achieving the best educational outcomes in a financially secure approach.

3.7 The following areas were identified as the key themes to support the local area in achieving better outcomes.

- Ensure that Mainstream schools can provide inclusive environments to allow children and young people to thrive, with the right spaces, resources, skilled staff and parental engagement.
- Support children & young people in Wirral with a range of multi-disciplinary services to meet their need, at the right time and right level, to prevent needs escalating; with all staff are clear and confident in delivering it
- Best support children at key transition points – especially primary to secondary – and take a child-centred approach which enables children and young people to thrive between phases.

3.8 Alongside the key areas of focus, the DBV has also highlighted the funding arrangements for the high needs block have not been reviewed since 2018 and given the units costs highlighted for some provisions, it would be appropriate to

review the high needs block funding arrangements to clarify best value is being achieved and all provisions are funded appropriately.

- 3.9 Following the Newton Europe/CIPFA programme a grant application was made to the DFE to support the work needed to take place over the next 18 months to address the key themes that have been identified. Wirral was notified in February 2024 of its success in receiving the grant monies for the next financial year.

4.0 KEY FINDINGS

- 4.1 The business case submitted to the DFE has identified 5 initiatives to support the local area in meeting the needs of young people and at the same time looking at mitigations to address the overspend in the high needs block. As identified in the DSG management plan and earlier in this report the key driver to increased spend on the Wirral is the increased EHCP assessment requests. The 5 initiatives that need to be delivered as part of the DBV programme are the following.
- ✓ Quality Assurance framework of the graduated approach from early years to post 16
 - ✓ Training, best practice and capacity to embed the graduated approach
 - ✓ Evidence and review of health therapies within the graduated approach
 - ✓ Sufficiency opportunities to develop resourced provision across both primary and secondary phases of education
 - ✓ Settings, education and employment opportunities for young people
- 4.2 The DBV programme delivery will be reviewed by the Department for Education (DFE) on a quarterly basis over the next academic year. Alongside this, a DBV in SEND board will be developed to oversee the use of the grant monies and the 5 initiatives that have been outlined as part of the bid.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The DBV programme has allowed the opportunity for a root cause analysis in relation education provision use and process in relation to young people with SEND across the Wirral. It outlines the key initiatives that need to be taken forward as part of the grant application.
- 6.2 The DBV programme has also outlined the need to review funding arrangements that have not analysed since 2018. It is imperative the right funding is in place to support young people in Wirral in a way that is cost effected in relation the high needs block.
- 6.3 The DBV programme has outlined the limits in capacity that will occur in the short term and outline the pressing need to increase the amount of resourced provision for young people with SEND across the Wirral.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the Forum notes the report and the success in being awarded the grant application monies of £1m.

- 7.2 That schools forum receives regular reports as the DBV programme progresses and a schools forum member support the DBV in SEND board that will be established.
- 7.3 That schools forum agrees to a review of the high needs funding model currently in place during the summer term and report is brought back to forum for the September meeting

Simone White
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