SENCo Briefing

Spring 2025

Agenda

Understanding the Engagement Model

- key messages from the engagement model guidance to support a consistent understanding,

- addressing the myths.

Delivering Better Value Workstream Two Funding

- Updates re reviewing funding arrangements, looking at baseline modelling and considering funding option models

- trends from the recent spend analysis, including barriers and potential solutions.

Understanding the Engagement Model

Aims

To understand what the Engagement Model is

To explore what is meant by the term Engagement

To understand who the Engagement Model is for

To look at common myths regarding the Engagement Model

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Rochford Review

- Diane Rochford led a review of assessment arrangements for pupils working below the standard of the national curriculum at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2

- Rochford Review made a series of recommendations, including:

  - removing P scales, as no longer fit for purpose

  - replacing them with final versions of the pre-key stage standards for pupils engaged in subject-specific learning

  - the 7 aspects of engagement for pupils not in subject-specific learning

  - improving the ITT/CPD assessment offer for teachers in this sector

- The department published the Review in 2016 and consulted on its recommendations in 2017, alongside the primary assessment consultation

Rochford Review: 7 aspects of engagement

- Pupils with the most complex needs, not in subject-specific learning, tend not to make linear progress

- debateable whether 'summative' assessment has meaning for these pupils

- Rochford Review recommended introducing the 7 aspects of engagement for these pupils, given engagement is a precursor to learning

- in government response, they committed to piloting the 7 aspects and pilot ran from January to July in 55 schools

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5 Areas of Engagement

- Exploration
- Realisation
- Anticipation
- Persistence
- Initiation

Exploration –what the guidance says…

This shows whether a pupil can **build on their initial reaction** to a new stimulus or activity, for example, whether they **display more than an involuntary or startled reaction to the activity**. Additionally, the pupil may be **interested in and curious about the stimulus or activity**, for example, they **may notice it or reach out to it**.

Exploration becomes more established when the pupil is **still responsive to the same stimulus or activity** when it is **presented in different contexts** or **environments**, for example, a different time of day, a different place or with different people.

Exploration is important in **identifying which stimuli or activities interest the pupil and motivate them** to pay attention and investigate them further, so that they can develop new knowledge and skills.

Realisation –what the guidance says...

This shows how the pupil **interacts with a new stimulus or activity** or **discovers a new aspect of a familiar stimulus or activity**. They will **display behaviours that show they want more control** of the stimulus or activity, for example by stopping it or trying to make changes to it. The pupil will often show what familiar adults consider to be 'surprise', 'excitement', 'delight', 'amazement' or 'fear'.

Realisation becomes more established when the pupil **uses the newly developed skills or knowledge in new ways** and in **different contexts or environments**. This is important as it can keep the pupil excited in their learning and prevents an activity from becoming routine.

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Anticipation –what the guidance says…

This shows how much the pupil **predicts, expects or associates a stimulus or activity with an event**. They may **anticipate that a familiar activity is about to start or finish by interpreting cues or prompts** such as auditory (what they hear), tactile (what they feel) and visual (what they see).

Anticipation becomes more established when the **pupil shows awareness that a familiar activity is about to start or finish, even when cues and prompts are reduced.**

Anticipation is important in **measuring the pupil's understanding of cause and effect**, for example if they do this, then something will happen. This prepares the brain for learning and **helps with the pupil's memory and sequencing**.

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Persistence –what the guidance says...

This shows whether the pupil can **sustain their attention in a stimulus or activity for long enough that they can actively try to find out more** and interact with it.

Persistence becomes more established when the pupil **shows a determined effort to interact with the stimulus or activity**. They will do this by showing **intentional changes** such as changes in their gaze, posture and hand movement.

Persistence is important so that the **pupil maintains an activity long enough to develop and reinforce learning**. It also helps the pupil apply their skills or knowledge so they can **achieve their desired outcome.**

Initiation –what the guidance says…

This shows **how much**, and the **different ways**, a **pupil investigates a stimulus or activity** in order to bring about a desired outcome. The pupil will **act spontaneously and independently during a familiar activity** without waiting for direction.

Initiation becomes more established when the **pupil shows they understand how to create an impact on their environment** in order to achieve a desired outcome.

Initiation is important to establish **how well the pupil is developing independence, which is required for more advanced learning.**

Who is the Engagement Model For?

The engagement model should be for any pupil in KS1 or above, who is not able to access subject specific study.

It must be remembered that it is an assessment tool not a curriculum.

Who is the Engagement Model For?

Myth busting

Myth	Response
The engagement model will replace the schools own assessment systems	The engagement model should be used in conjunction with a schools existing planning, assessment and recording systems to provide a flexible, holistic assessment of pupils not engaged in subject specific study
The DfE will need numerical data	Report to DfE which pupils are not engaged in subject-specific study and are assessed using the engagement model for KS1 and KS2 – schools are not required to submit any other data to DfE about the progress of these pupils
The engagement model reporting isn't user friendly for parents	Schools should encourage parents and carers to share their observations of the pupils. Engagement can be an important part of interaction with parents and carers. They can help schools understand when a pupil is at their most engaged, and a discussion of how the pupil is doing at school can be enriched by reference to The engagement model
The engagement model will become the curriculum	The engagement model is only an assessment tool and not the curriculum. Effective assessment using The engagement model can only take place when pupils are able to demonstrate their understanding and learning in a range of environments and contexts. Schools have the freedom to determine the design and content of the overarching curriculum model to engage their pupil in teaching and learning. Schools may devise curriculum models that are particularly appropriate for pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study
We will be told how and when to 'do it'	Schools will have autonomy over how they implement The engagement model and have the freedom to decide on a number of aspects including; how to use the model, how the assessments are conducted, how often assessments take place, how to use the information gathered, how to report the evidence
Workload will increase significantly	Schools will be able to manage the implementation of The engagement model and therefore able to consider the workload as part of the process
The engagement model assesses against the 7 indicators of engagement and each one is scored	The engagement model was adapted from the 7 aspects of engagement, devised by Professor Barry Carpenter. The engagement model was developed by members of the Rochford Review using evidence from evaluations of the pilots completed in 2018. The model recognises that engagement is multi-dimensional and breaks it down into 5 areas. The original scoring system has been removed.
Engagement will be described as being observed through lenses	During the pilots of The engagement model the 5 aspects were referred to as lenses. However following further refinement by the Rochford Review this terminology was changed to 'areas'

Teachers and SENCos are solely responsible for assessing under The engagement model	Assessments should be conducted by an appropriate adult familiar to the pupil so they are able to identify existing learning barriers.
The engagement model should only be applied to the end of year Key Stage assessment	The engagement model must be used for statutory assessment at KS1 and KS2 for all pupils working below the standards of national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject specific study. However it would also be suitable for use with pupils of any age working at this level.
The engagement model is a summative assessment approach	The engagement model combines a formative and summative assessment approach. Summative assessment alone is not useful for pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study.
The engagement model is only used in SEND schools	The engagement model should be used in all schools where pupils working at non subject specific study levels attend.
The engagement model doesn't support progression	Early development in cognition and learning provides the foundations necessary for pupils to progress to subject-specific study, if and ready to do so. The engagement model as a focus helps to ensure that they developing the right skills and concepts in their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. This can help them to progress onto subject specific study. There may be some pupils who are assessed using pre-key stage standards for one or more of the subjects and The engagement model used for the remaining subjects.
The engagement model is only for use with the most profound, non-ambulant, non-verbal pupils	Pupils working at engagement level are usually described as having sever or profound and multiple learning difficulties. They may have serious cognitive impairments and learning difficulties, which may lead to significant delays reaching developmental milestones. They are likely to need sensory stimulation. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing, use of symbols or simple language, whilst other pupils are ambulant.
Each area of engagement is observed as a standalone assessment	Each of the 5 areas are interrelated. The 5 areas are not hierarchical, so there is no expectation that the pupils need to demonstrate progress in all 5 areas. The areas provide a scaffolding to enable pupils to become independent in learning a new skill or concept.
Observations only happen once or only at set times	The DfE does not specify the number of times that the assessments should be conducted. Schools should set their own minimum requirements, ensuring it is manageable. Schools should make sure they are conducted regular enough to enable to gathering of evidence to show progress towards their outcomes and learning targets.

Time to reflect

DBV Workstream 2

SENCO Briefings June 2025

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Overview

Purpose

- DBV Workstream 2 Update

- Provide opportunity for more contribution to the current discussions

Agenda

1. Background

2. Element 3 Top Up Funding for pupils with Plans

3. SSPP review .

Workstream 2 - Background

Reviewing funding (HNF) arrangements, including SEND Support Provision Plans SPPs, to ensure that there is clarity for schools and settings about how much money they will receive for each pupil and how the decision regarding funding has been made

Children and young people at the centre

Needs Led

A graduated funding response linked to clear understanding of graduated provision built on quality first teaching and ordinarily available provision

Fair, transparent , clear, sustainable

Value for money -

DBV Diagnostic Phase

- Mainstream schools receive high average funding compared to other DBV local areas, but this does not include funding from SEND Support Provision Plans (SSPPs).

- There was high variation in funding for mainstream schools: some schools having almost 3x the DBV average funding.

- This suggests we need to focus on consistency of application and sharing of best practise to ensure effective use of funding.

- The spend on SSPPs has grown significantly since they were introduced: from £400K supporting less than 200 pupils in autumn term 2021, to £2.25m supporting over 700 children in autumn 2023

- Unmitigated forecasts (carrying on as we are) indicate that Birmingham will develop an in-year deficit in the HNB by 27-28, growing each year thereafter

Current Systems - Element 3 (top up funding)
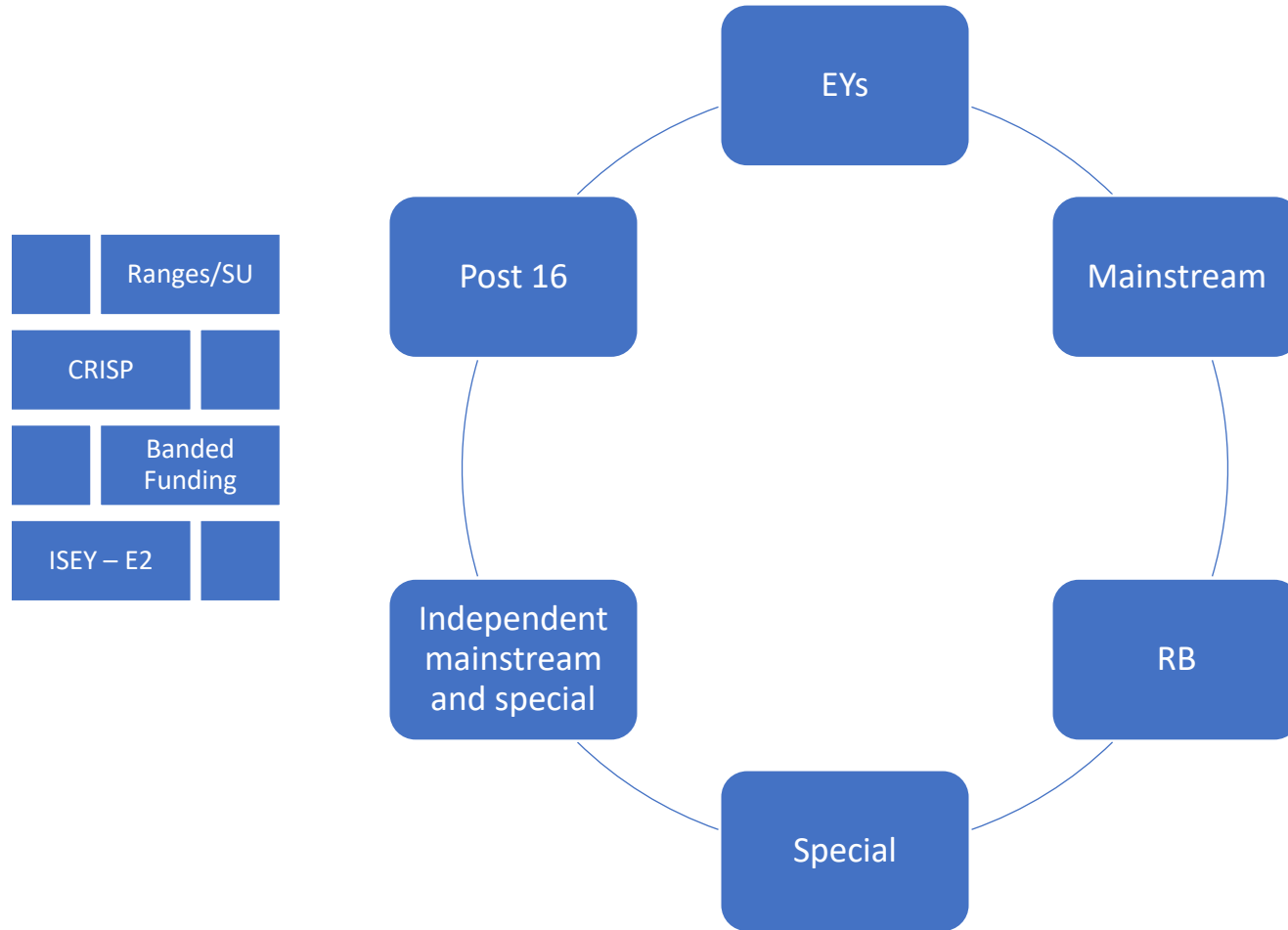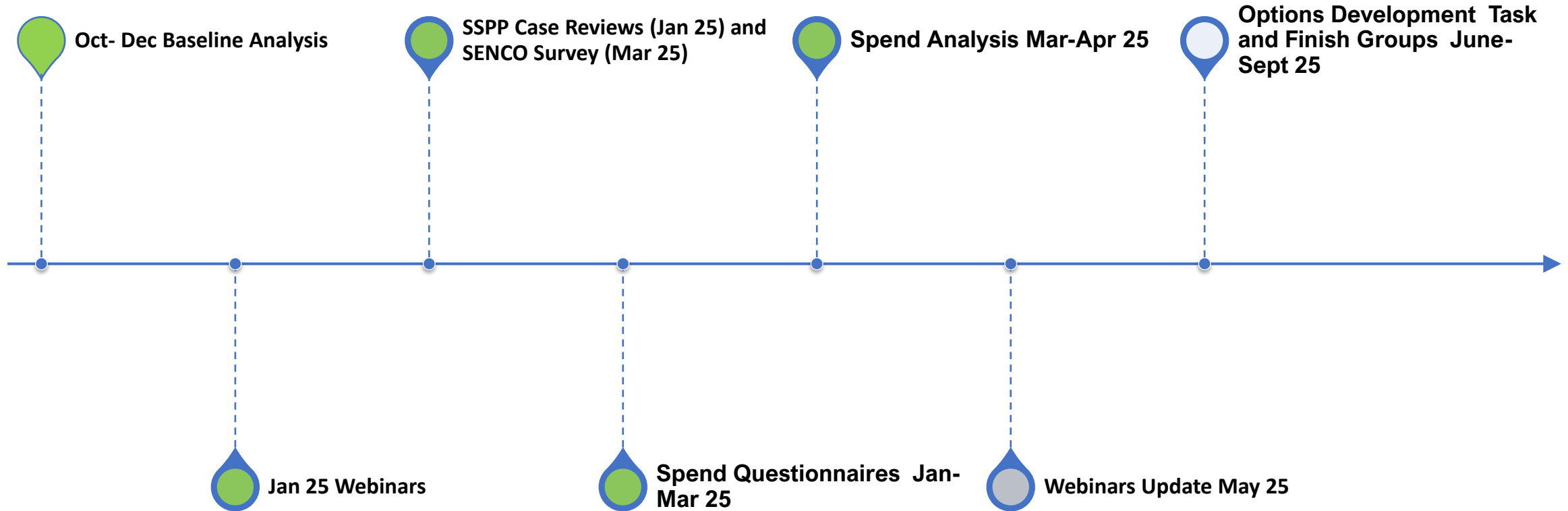
HNF Top Up Funding Analysis – the context

Current

- Needs Led

- "Top Up" Element 3 one funding stream in the HN spend

- Two different main resource allocations models for mainstream Inc. RBs and special – Ranges/Support Units and Banded Funding

- Mainstream schools receiving HN (contribution top up) in addition to Element 1 and 2 funding for pupils. RBs receive place funding

- Special schools fully funded by HN

- Additional funding arrangements within individual schools e.g. bespoke commissioning, ESN

- Via SSPPs the LA is using HN to give additional funding to pupils without EHC Plans

What the local area partnership have been telling us

- Funding focus should be on the pupils' needs not schools

- Not transparent

- Inconsistent

- Locality variance

- Lack of clarity about what can be spent

- Outdated banded descriptors

- Disconnect between models

- Clarification of what should be ordinarily available via OAG . What is the universal offer within the special school sector and the relationship with the banded model.

DBV Workstream 2 Timeline

Oct- Dec Baseline Analysis

SSPP Case Reviews (Jan 25) and SENCO Survey (Mar 25)

Spend Analysis Mar-Apr 25

Options Development Task and Finish Groups June-Sept 25

Jan 25 Webinars

Spend Questionnaires Jan-Mar 25

Webinars Update May 25

Spend Analysis

- **Informed by the baseline analysis**
- **The deadline was extended from 07.02.2025 to 25.03.2025**
- **Some returns are still needed to be secured from more Resource Bases.**

Sector	Number of Provisions	Number of Samples	Number of Schools - Submitted Returns	Number of Samples - Submitted Returns	Returns per Sector	Number of Schools - Queries/ Nil Return	Number of Schools - Queries Received and Return Outstanding	Queries/Nil Returns Per Sector	Number of Schools - No Response	Number of Samples - No Response	No Response per Sector
Special	27	464	22	403	86.85%	2	18	3.88%	3	43	9.27%
Mainstream	274	274	125	125	45.62%	44	44	16.06%	105	105	38.32%
Resource Base	45	62	14	18	29.03%	6	8	12.90%	25	36	58.06%
Total	**346**	**800**	**161**	**546**		**52**	**70**		**133**	**184**	
			47%	**68%**		**15%**	**9%**		**38%**	**23%**	

High Level Themes - From the quantitative data

- **Mainstream**

  - 125 Mainstream sample returns, of which 122 have been analysed (3 Nil Returns)

  - High level data provides insight on the highest and lowest spend across mainstream schools.

  - Data shows that from the funding received (including Notional SEN), 89% is spent on Staffing (Teachers and TAs)

  - The analysis showed that KS1/KS2 (Year 4 and below) have the highest spend compared to funding received, with Reception being the highest

  - VI, PD and SLCN pupils have the highest spend compared to funding received

  - The returns received from Maintained schools and Academies showed no variances between the sectors – based on high level averages

  - Approx 7% of Mainstream returns stated that they are not spending all their funding (reasoning to be confirmed – This could be due to data/sample reasons e.g. child left so only part return completed)

SSPP Review – Baseline Activity

- **Total open cases inc. Oct 24 (ex closed) 1,277. Forecast £7,148,573 . Average funding £5,598**
- **77% of schools (300) have secured SSPP funding (ex Nursery). 7% SSPP accounts for 100% of top funding (no pupils with EHC Plans)**

Sector	%Age of Schools Claiming SSPP Funding
Primary	86.67%
Secondary	48.78%
Total	**78.53%**

KS	%Age of SSPPs
Year -1	0%
Year 0	21%
KS1	47%
KS2	27%
KS3	4%
KS4	1%
Total	100%

Agreed Support Units	%
1	0.01%
2	0.36%
3	8.10%
4	16.77%
5	28.97%
6	45.08%
6+	0.72%

- **Range from 0 – 20 SSPPs per setting, 0-6.54% of school population**

SEN Support Provision Plans

- Case Reviews

- SENCO Survey

Good tool to collate graduated response evidence

Quicker Access to funding compared to EHCNA route

Allows for short term Intensive Intervention

Effective Transition Support

Parental Engagement

High percentage of children receiving highest level of funding

?? CYP would have met the criteria for an EHC Needs Assesment

Paperwork including duplication

Funding levels

Other options

The aim of the reviews was the following:

Is the purpose of the SSPP clear

Is the decision-making process fair and consistent

What are the funding data trends

Are there other options available for effective use of E3 HNF for individual pupils with SEND who do not have EHC Plans

The use of E3 HNF for individual pupils with SEND who do not have EHC Plan
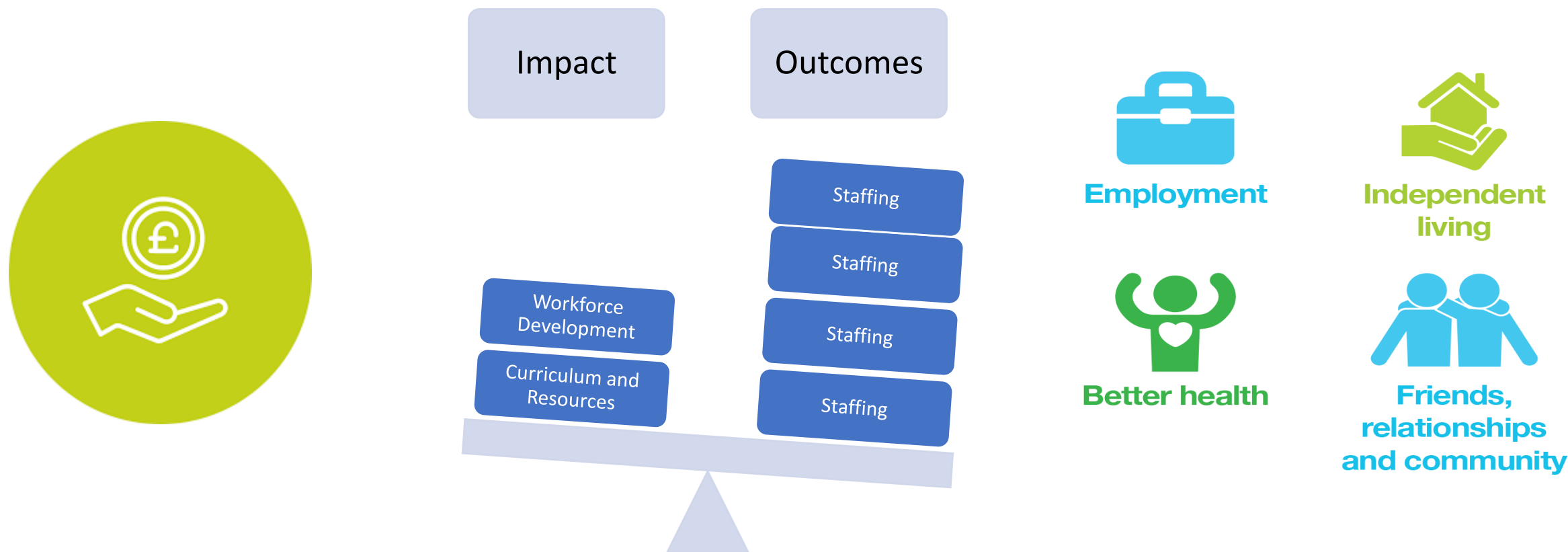
Options Development – Task and Finish Groups

	High Needs Funding (HNF) for pupils with EHC Plans	
A	No change to the separate current top-up banded systems for mainstream, RB and special – just the annual inflationary uplift	X
B	Keep separate systems for sectors, review/refresh and ensure better alignment	?
C	One banded system to serve all sectors	?
D	One banded systems for mainstream and RBs plus Unit cost model for special schools	?
E	As C with bespoke variation	?

	Pre-statutory High Needs funding (HNF) for pupils on SEN Support	
1	Continue with current system involving SEND Support Provision Plans with amendments	?
2	Alternative models for pre-statutory funding for individual pupils	?
3	End pre-statutory funding for pupils on SEN Support	?

Discussion Activity -

How can we make an effective financial graduated response more effective and sustainable?

Do we need to reprioritise other aspects of what we use top up spend?

Impact

Outcomes

Staffing

Staffing

Workforce Development

Staffing

Curriculum and Resources

Staffing

Employment

Independent living

Better health

Friends, relationships and community

AOB

- Send webinar questions to
DeliveringBetterValue@birmingham.gov.uk