



Northumberland

County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Luke Dixon

Email: Andrea.Todd@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct:

Date: 21 November 2024

Dear Sir or Madam,

A virtual meeting of the **SCHOOLS' FORUM** will be held on **WEDNESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2024 at 9.30 AM**. You will be sent a link to the meeting and I would be grateful if you could accept or decline the invitation accordingly.

I remind you that if you are unable to attend, you should arrange for an appropriate substitute to attend on your behalf. Alternatively forward any written representations to me in advance.

In the current situation can I ask that Forum members read all papers prior to the meeting and forward any questions or contributions to me in advance of the meeting, however, we will do everything possible to take comments at the meeting too.

Yours faithfully

Luke Dixon
Clerk to the Forum

To: Members of the Schools' Forum

**Copy to Audrey Kingham, Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education
and Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson**

AGENDA

It is expected that the matters included in this part of the agenda
will be dealt with in public.

		Decision/Consultation/ Information/Action
1.	MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE	Information
2.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	Information
3.	DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)	Information
4.	MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (Pages 3 - 10) Minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on Wednesday 17 July 2024, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record, and signed by the Chairman.	Action
5.	COMMUNICATION (Pages 11 - 22) 1. HN Committee 14 October 2024 Draft Minutes (attached) 2. F40 Public Accounts Committee Submission (attached)	Information
6.	DSG FINANCIAL MONITORING 2024/25 (ATTACHED) (Pages 23 - 26)	Information
7.	SEN UPDATE AND UPDATED DASHBOARD (ATTACHED) (Pages 27 - 40)	Information
8.	NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA AND SCHOOL FUNDING CONSULTATION (Report to follow)	Consultation
9.	2025 WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING DATES (ATTACHED) (Pages 41 - 42)	Information
10.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	Information
11.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING The next scheduled meeting of the Schools' Forum is Wednesday 15 January 2025	Information

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

SCHOOLS' FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools' Forum on Wednesday, 17 July 2024 at 10.30 a.m. held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF.

PRESENT

G. Wilkins, St Wilfrid's RC Primary School
(Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Headteacher Representatives

A. Brown, Corbridge Middle School

A. Mead, Cramlington Hillcrest School

Governor Representatives

K. Faulkner, Collingwood School

B. Watson, St Robert's RC First School

Academies Representatives

G Atkins, Hadrian Learning Trust
J. Holmes, Malvins Close Academy
(part of Wise Academies Trust)

J. Wilson, The Duchess's
Community High School

Roman Catholic Diocese – Vacant Post

Church of England Diocese – N. Threlfall

EYDCP-PVI – K. Dickinson

Pupil Referral Unit Representative – R. Carr

16-19 Provider of Education Representative – W. Stephenson

Trades Union Representative – Vacant Post

Councillor R. Wearmouth (observer)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ch.'s Initials.....

S. Aviston	Head of School Organisation and Resources
M. Finlay	Head of SEND
R. Greally	Assistant Democratic Officer
B. Parvin	Education and Skills Business Manager
C. Ponting	Senior Manager - Schools HR
C. Street	Principal Accountant
D. Street	Director of Education, SEND and Skills

01. MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP DETAIL

- 01.1 It was noted that Sarah Smith from Scremerston First School had been successfully appointed onto the forum.

02. APOLOGIES

- 02.1 Apologies were received from D. Cookson, A. Hardie, A. Kingham, B. Mansfield, B. Reed, A. Russell, S. Smith and Councillor G. Renner-Thompson.

03. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

- 03.1 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Forum held on Wednesday, 14 February 2024, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

04. COMMUNICATIONS

- 04.1 B. Parvin, Education and Skills Business Manager gave an overview regarding the F40 group. It was noted that the Department of Education was actively looking at £10,000 "place funding" the special schools received for each commissioned place. More information would be brought to the forum once it was confirmed.

RESOLVED that Schools' Forum noted the update.

05. DSG PROVISIONAL OUTTURN

- 05.1 C. Street, Principal Accountant, introduced the report to the forum. The report presented the DSG outturn position for 2023-24 along with implications of the outturn and anticipated future pressures. The designated schools grant was discussed and budget blocks were agreed in the February 2024 Schools' Forum meeting. It was noted that the Early Years Block was funded in arrears based upon the census returns and a final settlement for Spring term 2024 was due in

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July 2024. Therefore the service had estimated the final 2023-24 settlement which was reflected in the budget.

- 05.2 The overall DSG reserves of surplus balances carried forward from 2022-23 was £4.501 million. There was a withdrawal of £2.434 million from the reserve and put into the budget position for 2023-24 which left a forecast balance of £2.067 million in the reserve. However, due to additional HN demands over the 2023-24 year the reserve had reduced down to £1.159 million. The report outlined the blocks and showed where there had been overspends and underspends. It was highlighted that the Higher Needs Block overspend was significant due to rapid growth in the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which was financially unsustainable, and the growth in EHCPs was set to continue through 2024-25. It was also noted that the overspend included the budget transfer from the schools block and the DSG reserve; without this additional funding the HNB would have seen a larger overspend. It was stressed that grants and vacant staffing posts were not recurrent savings and could not be relied upon for future savings.
- 05.4 The budgetary pressures had increased significantly since 2021-22 particularly in relation to SEN places, top-ups and alternative provisions. The continued rise in number along with inflationary pressures indicated that the HNB deficit would rise to £8.393 by the end of 2024-25. The intention was to ring fence each block at the end of year position which would ensure any funds carried forward would be utilised effectively.
- 05.5 Members discussed that it was a similar picture across the region. The LA7 had forecast similar predictions and a paper was set to go to Central Government to outline concerns for future budgets. The BEST value for money workstream was reviewing school transport particularly EOTAS to try and reduce further overspend. It was highlighted that Cabinet would receive a report on School Transport and it was a high priority of the Council. It was highlighted that the Department of Education 'safety valve' had not been triggered yet however it could not be guaranteed in the future that it would be needed.
- 05.6 In line with previous practice, a request was made in respect of the English as an Additional Language (EAL) team and Trade Union Facility Time for DSG balances to be carried forward into 2024/25. This was agreed.

RESOLVED that Schools' Forum agreed;

- a) To approve the carry forward of the 2023-24 Trade Union Facility Surplus of £126,389 in line with the attached at Appendix A;
- b) To approve the carry forward of the 2023-24 English as an Additional Language (EAL) surplus of £74,913 in line with the report attached at Appendix A;
- c) To note the intention to carry forward the respective DSG block (Central Services Schools, Early Years, High Needs and Schools Block) on a ringfenced basis into 2024-25.

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06. USE OF DSG CONTINGENCY

- 06.1 S. Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources drew members' attention to the main points of the report which sought to provide an update on the proposed use of the DSG contingency to support the ongoing schools' reorganisation projects in Coquet and Berwick Partnerships.
- 06.2 A contingency fund was created in 2017 to support school closure. Schools Forum had supported the contingency and it had built up a reserve of £1.3 million to fund the closing of schools deficit budgets and support the salary safeguards and employment of staff who were deemed at risk as a result of changes in school structures.
- 06.3 It was agreed that a report would be brought to Schools' Forum when the contingency would be used. It was confirmed that the reorganisation within the Coquet Partnership would be completed by 31 August 2025 and therefore the financial implications for the reorganisation would be fully understood and reported to the forum within the financial year 2025/26. Reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership was due to be completed 31 August 2026 and the school budgets position would be reported to the forum during the 2026/27 financial year.
- 06.4 A voluntary agreement was in place called the staffing protocol. The protocol was in place to ensure the retention of good and outstanding staff which provided stability and excellent transition for pupils during reorganisations. The contingency would be used to fund the difference in salary if needed for up to 3 years of successful individuals redeployed during reorganisations. It was confirmed that the protocol was bespoke to each partnership, and was to support ongoing employment of those staff at risk.

RESOLVED that Schools' Forum agreed:

- (a) To note there will be a requirement to access the contingency fund closing school deficits as a result of school reorganisations in Coquet and Berwick within the financial years 2025/26 & 2026/27;
- (b) To note the aim of the staffing protocols that are in place within both partnerships is to mitigate the need for redundancies, and therefore minimising the financial burden on the closing and reorganising school budgets;
- (c) To agree to receive an annual report on the level of the financial support given to schools in the Coquet and Berwick partnerships.

07. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK SUGGESTED ACTION

- 07.1 David Street, Director of Education, SEND and Skills, introduced the presentation to the forum. It was highlighted that there were multiple areas of SEND that were successful in the County. However, due to continuous growth in EHCP's, special school places, the high need block overspend was only forecast to increase.

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- 07.2 Possible solutions were offered to the forum members' attention was drawn to the main solutions. Members were advised that to reduce the overspend the authority could bring the EHCP practice in line with national averages, manage the growth in top up spend and meet the needs as close to home as possible. To bring EHCP practice in line with national averages the authority would continue and extend the robust challenge of COSA applications as well as offer a credible and appropriate 'Northumberland Education Support Plan' (NESP) which would support meeting needs in mainstream schools without requiring an EHCP closer to home but with a lower average banding. Managing the growth in top up spend would mean introducing a new banding model valued between £1000 and £18,000 for EHCP and NESP's. Schools and Trusts that had an overall revenue balance above 10% (secondary) and 16% (primary) in the previous financial year would not be eligible for an increased banding request. This would affect approximately 25% of schools in the County. The authority would support all schools to deliver 'ordinarily available provision' to ensure needs were met as close to home as possible. It would also share the expectation the learners with NESP's would have their needs met in their local school. Further training and support would be provided in mainstream schools. The aim would be to further reduce out of County placements by increasing highest need capacity in Northumberland Special Schools.
- 07.3 Another solution offered to the forum was to increase the income and funding by transferring more from other blocks. For example, increasing the transfer from schools' block from 0.5% to 1%. Lobbying from central government was also suggested as well as external funding streams. It was noted that there had been funding from the Council previously but a possible solution would be to gain more funding support from the administration.
- 07.4 Members were mindful of the disproportionate impact the reductions in growth would have to smaller schools. Concerns were also raised that it felt as though schools with a positive budget would be effectively penalised by not being eligible to request a banding increase. There were concerns it may lead to schools not budgeting appropriately however officers had confidence in the integrity of Headteachers and governing bodies. Concerns were also raised regarding the transfer of funds from other blocks. It was acknowledged that it would help with the higher needs block however concerns were raised that the need for the transfer was not temporary and could become a recurrent need. It was also felt that the transfer would effectively be a cut to the schools block.
- 07.5 Members discussed the recommendations. Engagement around the 'Ordinarily Available Provision' guidance was scheduled to take place in the Autumn 2024 term and a report completed by Christmas. Officers confirmed any changes to the guidance would be in consultation with SENCO networks. Work within the 'in house' SEND provision was being undertaken. Officers confirmed that the report could be brought to the September meeting to give members a sense of what was to come within in the strategy. The post 16 SEND provision was due to be reviewed more information would be brought to the November meeting as there would need to be a triangulation of data collected. It was confirmed that the post 16 review would look at all options available to post 16 including private and public sector. Members felt that further guidance was needed on the Northumberland

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Education Support Plan and how pupils would be referred to it and EHCPs as it would have an impact on the school's decision making. It was confirmed the COSA thresholds and process would remain the same as it is bound by the code of practise. The NESP would focus on whether the school needed additional resources to meet the pupil's needs. The plan would slow the growth in EHCP plans by putting another option in place. It was agreed that a working group would be set up to discuss and consider the whole school/Trust financial position when deciding on all top up growth request. Members raised concerns over how schools would clawback funding on children with an immediate need that was resourced by a school and then the child moved to a new school. The EY inclusion fund being financed by the Early Years Block would have no impact on early years practitioners. Officers confirmed a report for the increase in schools block contribution would be formally made to the November School Forum meeting. If Schools Forum disagreed with the request, the Council's recourse then was to seek the agreement of the Secretary of State for Education.

07.6 In relation to savings generated by changes to payment timelines, this would generate savings in two ways:

- Requests for increases to bandings for existing students would not be paid till the start of the next term, not changed mid-term
- Additional notional SEN payments made to Schools would be calculated and paid at the beginning of a term, not the end of a term. This would give schools greater certainty but would marginally reduce the overall amounts paid as students granted EHCPs mid-term would not be counted for additional notional SEN payment purposes until the following term.

07.7 Following the discussion it was agreed the following actions would be taken:-

- A report would be brought to September forum to inform members about the updated guidance in relation to SEND and AP Place Planning strategy.
- An update would be brought to November forum which would provide members information on post 16 SEND provision.
- A model on the new banding system would be brought to the September forum.
- A working group would set up to discuss and consider the whole school/trust financial position (notional spend and balances) in relation to top up growth requests.

RESOLVED that Schools' Forum agreed the following:-

- a) Advocate the Northumberland 'Ordinarily Available Provision' Guidance as the mandatory baseline for SEND provision in all schools and settings.
- b) An introduction of Northumberland Education Support Plan option, via a pilot in Early Years and KS1
- c) To apply new payment timelines
- d) For the EY Inclusion Fund to be fully financed from the Early Year Block.
- e) Receive further information about an increased Schools Block contribution for 25/26 to 1%.

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08. SCHEME FOR FINANCING MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

- 08.1 B. Parvin, Education and Skills Business Manager drew members' attention to the main points of the report. It was brought to members' attention that Local Authorities were required to public schemes for financing schools, setting out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintain which was reviewed annually.
- 08.2 Other than a minor change regarding the clarification of the accounting treatment of leases, no other changes to the scheme had been proposed by the EFSA or NCC.

RESOLVED that Schools' Forum approve the draft scheme for Financing Maintained Schools.

09. 2024 WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING DATES

- 09.1 The schedule of dates had been circulated with the agenda papers and a copy filed with the signed minutes.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next scheduled meeting of the Schools' Forum will be Wednesday, 25 September 2024.

CHAIR_____

DATE_____

Ch.'s Initials.....

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Northumberland
County Council

Wellbeing and Community Health
Services Group

Education and Skills Service

Meeting: High Needs Sub Committee of the Schools Forum
Date: Thursday 14th November 2024
Time: 09.30am
Venue: Virtual Teams Meeting

Present: Graham Wilkins Chair and Governor at St Wilfrid’s RC Primary School Alan Hardie , Chief Executive NCEA Trust Graeme Atkins Headteacher, Hadrian Learning Trust Andrea Mead Headteacher Hillcrest Barry Reed Headteacher, Gilbert Ward Academy James Wilson Co-Headteacher, The Duchess High School Richard Carr , Headteacher, Northumberland PRU Jo Holmes , Malvin’s Close Academy	Ben Watson Business Director Seaton Valley Federation Peter Monaghan , Northumberland College (FE Representative) David Street Director of Education Sue Aviston Head of Schools Organisation and Resources Bruce Parvin Education & Skills Business Manager Amanda Gilchrist SEN Finance Officer Abigail Russell Finance Manager Callum Street Principal Accountant
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Notes Lisa Headington

1.	Welcome and Introductions	Action
2.	In Attendance See above	
3.	Apologies:	
4.	Declaration of personal or pecuniary interest in any agenda item. No declaration of pecuniary interest declared by members.	
5.	Minutes of the previous meeting/Matters arising from Previous Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting were noted and accepted as a true record by those present at the last meeting, G Wilkins (Chair) had submitted apologies and this was recorded.	
6.	FINANCIAL UPDATE (attached) CS presented an update on the 2024/25 DSG as reported to Cabinet as at the end of September 2024. After recoupment there remains £168.094 million DSG for the year, current projections indicate an overall £5.139 million deficit, as a result of a projected £8.537 High Needs Block deficit. SEN Top Ups to mainstream and special school continues to be the largest element of this pressure, offset to a small extent by underspending in SEN Support Service teams. GA asked if HN figures included the transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs, CS confirmed that was the case.	
7.	SEN AND ECHP Data BP presented SEN Data as collated and published by the DfE via the SEN 2 collection, and current EHCP Dashboard information. DfE data showed a 15% increase in the year to January 2024, and this	

	<p>was exacerbated by a further 687 plans since then to the current position recorded in the dashboard of 3997. ASD is the highest recorded primary need, with increases noted in SEMH. GW asked how schools are managing with the increase in learners with EHCP's.</p> <p>GA noted the biggest struggle are the learners with additional needs who need support but are not funded. They have had previous surplus as they had less outgoings in COVID but this is being used. GW asked if the need is geographical?</p> <p>DS noted that while specific needs can be different in individual schools, depending on previous experience, growth in number is across the Board.</p> <p>JW agreed with GA that the SEN support group are taking much of the resource and are their biggest concern. Needs may be addressed in primary, and they then come to a large secondary and struggle to cope. Requirements for 20-week cycle of evidence prior to financial support is challenging, they have 3 learners at risk of PEX.</p> <p>AH explained their staff are seeking support for many learners who should have EHCP's but don't yet. Option of keeping groups of children in primary in smaller settings in the future to try and address this.</p> <p>JH noted that primaries can be successful for getting funding but there are recruitment issues as no one wants to take on a role that is not permanent. Concerns of capacity in special school as mainstream can only support for limited time and then the learners need specialist provision.</p> <p>PM noted there is not just a requirement to support the primary need but there are many associated needs which come alongside and need support.</p>	
8.	<p>UPDATED HIGH NEED BENCHMARKING TOOL</p> <p>BP had circulated a link to the latest version of the High Needs benchmarking tool, which had been updated with the latest SEN 2 data, plus financial information relating to the 2022/23 Outturn and 2023/24 budget positions. Figures supported previous view about the higher increase in plan numbers in Northumberland</p> <p>GA asked what the information actually tells us as Northumberland is a unique authority and what conclusions are the local authority making as a result.</p> <p>DS explained that there have been some interesting meetings as when the DfE asks why Northumberland are different it is easy to explain why. Northumberland are in line with others for most benchmarks. They comment that Northumberland have a large percentage of leaners in special schools. This doesn't show that our mainstream schools are not inclusive but rather there is a large group of SEN support in schools in addition to the EHCP learners. Comments and queries are easily defensible based on our region and knowledge and overall, there is not enough funding to meet the need within the county.</p> <p>It is recognised that there are less of the 'typical' learners within our schools and how can we develop our schools and provision to meet this new need. How can we meet the need of the learners as close to home as possible in an effective way.</p> <p>BP explained that actions are based on local intelligence and specific plans rather than standard statistics, supplemented through sources such as the SEND And AP Place Planning strategy.</p> <p>DS added the number of learners whose needs are being met is higher than ever so that is a positive. We need to look at how we get the resources into the schools where needed to meet needs of more learners.</p>	

	GW agreed that Northumberland is doing a fantastic job at meeting needs despite lack of funding.	
9.	DRAFT DSG MANAGEMENT PLAN BP shared a copy of the DfE DSG Management Plan tool, which is required for completion by the DfE for all authorities reporting an overall deficit. The actions taken to reduce the deficit “mitigations” had to be shown in the document, this would include the level of transfer, changes to timing of increases, notional changes etc. A “disapplication request” would need to be made to the DfE to reflect the requested transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, DfE advice was that this should be structured in two parts, 0.5% which could be agreed solely with Schools Forum approval, and a further 0.5% which required specific Secretary of State for Education approval. As in previous years it would be worded as a maximum transfer so less could potentially be taken depending on the final funding allocations.	
10.	AOB GW thanked members for their attendance and participation and reminded all of the School Forum date of 27 November 2024. It was agreed that High Needs Committee dates should also be scheduled in advance for 2025, as was the case with Schools Forum dates.	
	The meeting closed at 10.45 a.m.	

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Written evidence from f40 provided to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry on SEND

From Karen Westcott <karen@dtw.co.uk>

Date Thu 14/11/2024 3:45 PM

Cc Karen Westcott <karen@dtw.co.uk>

 2 attachments (357 KB)

Written evidence for the Public Accounts Committee from f40.pdf; f40 High Needs_funding by authority graph 2024-25 (Share).pdf;

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Northumberland County Council. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

To all members of f40, including Executive Members, Cabinet Members, Directors, School Finance Managers and School Forum Chairs

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Good Afternoon f40 members

During the past week we were invited to submit written evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry [Support for children and young people with special educational needs - Committees - UK Parliament](#), which is being held next Monday, November 18. The inquiry follows the publication of the National Audit Office report on SEND.

We had limited time to respond, but submitted the attached document outlining our concerns around the SEND crisis, looking at the unfairness of funding, insufficient funding, EHCPs, the statutory override, independent provision, accountability, tribunals, attendance, free school meals, and investment.

A copy of our submission is attached, along with the graph showing the disparity of High Needs funding. It is also on the f40 [website](#). I hope you find it useful.

Many thanks

Karen Westcott

Karen Westcott

Head of PR, Engagement & Public Affairs

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November 13, 2024

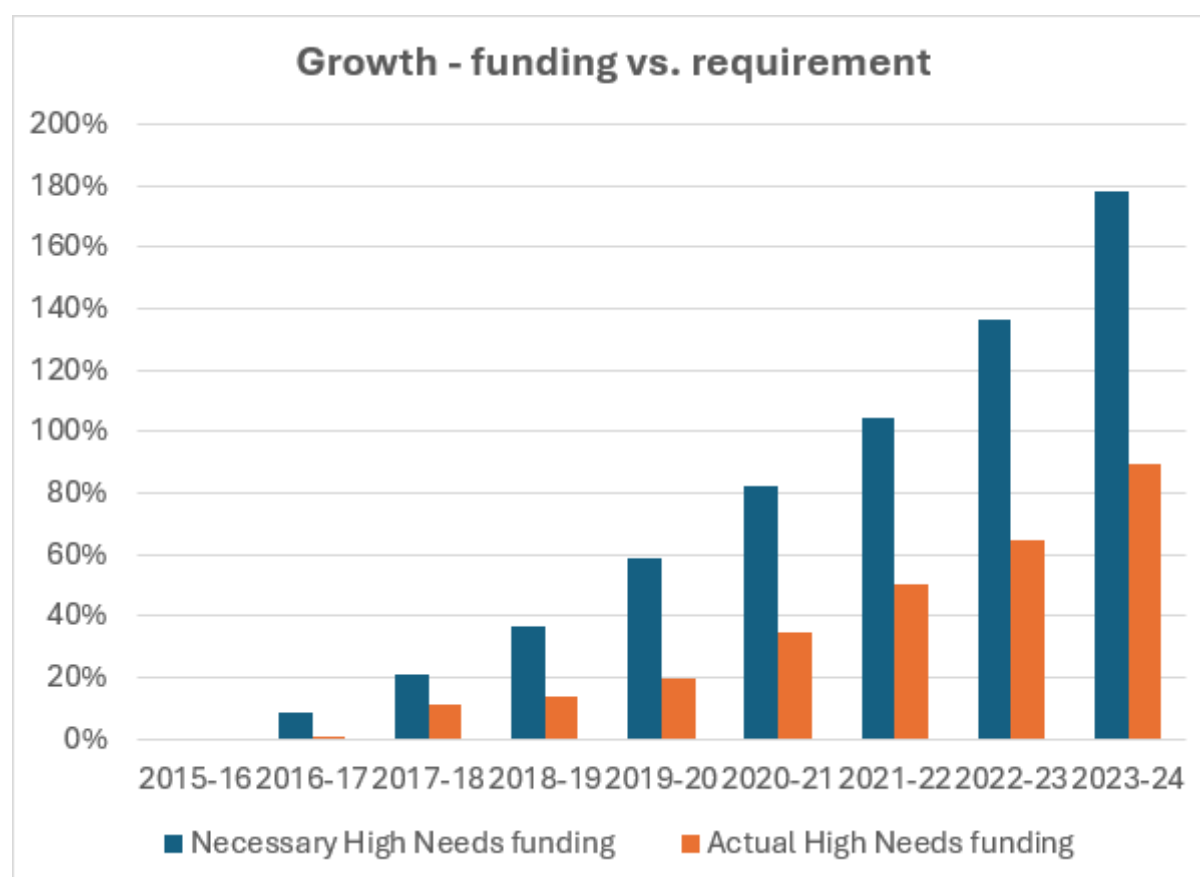
Written evidence for the Public Accounts Committee from f40

This evidence has been provided by Hampshire County Council, supported by Dorset Council, Gloucestershire County Council, and Derbyshire County Council.

Support for children and young people with special educational needs

Unfair funding

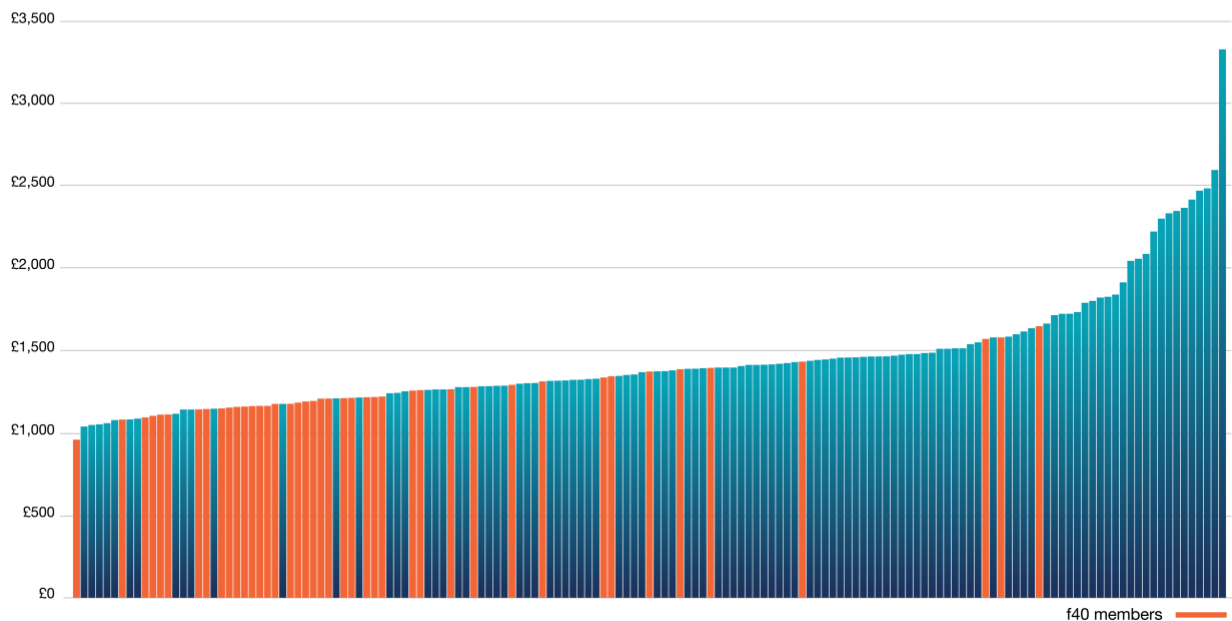
- Insufficient quantum of funding – whilst High Needs Block funding has grown significantly, increased demand, complexity, inflation and the impact of falling pupil numbers has meant funding has not kept pace, impacting on schools and the wider system of Special Educational Needs. f40 and other educational organisations believe £4.6bn additional funding would be required simply to account for inflation and increased demand for EHCPs since 2015.



- Inequitable distribution of funding – the High Needs National Funding Formula should reflect the current needs of pupils, however, over £3bn of the £10.5bn High Needs budget for 2024-25 is funding historic spend and a funding floor to protect some local authorities against losses. This means significant inequality in the funding of pupils across the country and the resulting impact of differing levels of support available.

The disparity of High Needs funding across local authorities in England is clear from this graph, below. An A3 version has also been submitted as an attachment, which clearly identifies the local authorities.

Variation of High Needs Block funding per pupil allocations 2024-25 by local authority



Funding for children with EHC Plans

For every child with an EHCP, there is a notional £6,000 that a school contributes towards the provision from their core budget. This means the more children with EHCPs a school has, the higher the financial contribution it needs to make, and this causes significant pressures on the budgets of schools willing to take more children with EHC Plans. This creates a perverse incentive not to take children with EHCPs and is reflected in often-seen situations where two schools in one area will have very different numbers of children with EHCPs on their rolls and tends to disproportionately impact disadvantage.

No investment in prevention & the consequences to that, including driving requests for EHC Plans

- The current cohorts have changed from those previously with more complex or co-morbidity of needs, meaning the approaches used previously may be less impactful.
- Schools' application of ordinarily available provision (this is the SEN support that should be available for all children as routine) varies greatly.
- Schools cannot access additional funding for additional adults or interventions without children having an EHCP, so they and parents may see this as the only solution if additional support is required, especially considering the current pressures on school finances.
- Access to specialists is challenging and having an EHC assessment and plan can expedite this.

Accountability/curriculum and its impact on inclusion

- Ofsted system of accountability is focused on standards; whilst clearly this covers pupil outcomes, the notion of standards needs to be wide. This can become lost in the pursuit of a narrow view of strength.
- Schools in areas of high deprivation less likely to achieve a positive Ofsted outcome – this is recognised by current government as needing consideration.
- The last government promoted the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) as an ambition for all schools – this excludes a number of practical and vocational subjects, which may prevent pupils having an appropriately matched curriculum.
- Defunding of BTECs and lack of Level 1 post-16 courses, but vocational and technical skills pathways promoted (to meet local need).
- All of these elements might be considered as disincentive to take children with additional needs who may need a different curriculum in order to engage and thrive.

Attendance

- Absence nationally remains stubbornly high at, on average, double the rates of pre-pandemic.
- New statutory burdens from the new statutory attendance guidance, no extra resource as no increase in funding.
- Statutory requirement for support and officer involvement for children who need joint monitoring from LAs – those who are 50% or less and those who have 15 or more days absence through illness – and there is an expectation that the LA funds places for these children in some cases.
- Changes to attendance coding – with the removal of authorised online tuition coding, so this now counts as absence.
- Young people aged 16-18 not in education, employment, or training (NEET) increasing from 500 to 1200 since 2019, no extra resource.
- All of these issues will impact particularly on children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional needs, where regular attendance at school is key to improving outcomes.

Independent non-maintained special schools (INMSS) and Alternative provision (AP)

- Rising demand for specialist placements has led to a lack of spaces, so children have to be placed in INMSS and unregistered AP, which is not regulated.
- The current tribunal system gives parents greater power to request INMSS or AP placements.
- INMSS places can be a cost-effective solution for some pupils, however, many are high cost and currently there are some large provider companies, which own multiple placements and make large profits that go to shareholders. The average cost of an INMSS placement (in Hampshire) is £70,000 compared to on average £25,000 for maintained special school.

The tribunal system

- The volume of appeals requesting specialist placement continues to rise at a rate exceeding local authorities' ability to develop provision.
- There are national pressures on the Tribunal Service as whole, causing significant delays in hearings:
 - The LA has been subsequently required to manage additional processes, such as additional paperwork in the form of supplementary bundles, case review documentation and often additional pre-hearing meetings or dispute resolutions given the prolonged timeframe.
- There is inequity in the system caused by the complexity of the process and varied access to legal support. The area with highest recorded Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (in Hampshire) has the highest number of tribunal appeals, whilst the area with the lowest recorded GDP has the lowest number of appeals registered.

- The lack of update to legislation has meant this remains centred around parental choice rather than well informed opinions of professionals, and with lack of focus in the process of provision being proportionate to level of need.

Admissions and issues with own admission authority schools and SEN / Behaviour challenge

- Different types of schools have different freedoms with regards to admissions arrangements. This can make it difficult for parents to understand and navigate arrangements e.g. one academy places siblings higher in their criteria than catchment. This means catchment children are more likely to miss out on a place in this area, than for a community / voluntary controlled school.
- The LA cannot compel own admission authority schools to admit standard applications over PAN, nor can it compel them not to admit over PAN where there is surplus. This makes a coordinated LA response to these issues difficult.
- As high needs issues, particularly SEN and behaviour issues increase, it is becoming harder to persuade all schools to admit these children, due to both funding and the high-profile nature of school performance. Schools also increasingly 'cap' in-year, giving no local capacity.

Statutory override

- Increasing local authority deficits relating to Special Educational Needs as demands and expectations set out in government policy exceeding funding provided.
- Many LAs (including Hampshire) would not be able to close the ongoing annual deficit in future years, meaning that the cumulative deficit will continue to rise without Government intervention.
- Statutory override allowing us to carry forward the deficit ends on 31 March 2026 and at this stage there is no national solution to this problem. Any suggestion that ongoing in year deficits or the cumulative deficit must be made good by the local authority will put the Council in the position of issuing a Section 114 notice and starting discussions with Government.
- Councils already financially suffering due to the loss of interest in reserves due to the High Needs deficit.

Transport

Increased numbers of students with an EHCP leads to increased numbers on School Transport

- 30% increase in the last 3 years.
- The number of additional local placements has not kept up, so students are travelling further:
 - Therefore, students are more stressed by the longer journey to school.
 - Longer journeys are more expensive, and there is less scope for students to share a vehicle.
- This affects the cost of the service – huge increases in cost.
- Statutory School Transport must be free by law – free transport provided to families that could afford to pay.
- Whilst the High Needs Block has seen some increase in funding to recognise growth in demand, local authorities have not seen comparative growth in funding for activities they are required to fund directly.

Free School Meals (FSM) funding

- FSM funding is £2.58 per meal and (Universal Infant) UIFSM funding is £2.53 per meal.
- UIFSM started in September 2014 funded at £2.30 per meal.
- In 10 years, school meal funding has increased by **10%**
- In the same period NLW has increased by **71%**

- Food inflation to September 2023 is **27%** compared to 2014.
- Hampshire In-house Education Service's cost per meal is £3.20 from September '24.
- *This obviously impacts schools with more deprived cohorts disproportionately.*

Academisation

- Academisation can take up to two years; until conversion it remains the LA's responsibility. School leaders and the community can feel challenged by this protracted period, and it can arrest their single focus on improving.
- Finding a Trust can be difficult; sometimes the Trusts withdraw after due diligence, particularly if there are budget issues. This leaves schools in limbo and securing leadership can be difficult.
- The attainment of academies in a number of Hampshire academies is extremely poor but as they are not inadequate the DfE does not have a robust intervention mechanism, so there are few/no levers for improvement.
- Several academies have high levels of suspensions and exclusions with the LA having limited means to challenge Trusts to act.
- *This obviously impacts schools with more deprived cohorts disproportionately.*

Childcare Market Changes

The childcare market is generally responding well to changes however, there are concerns re disadvantaged two-years-olds being squeezed out of provision.

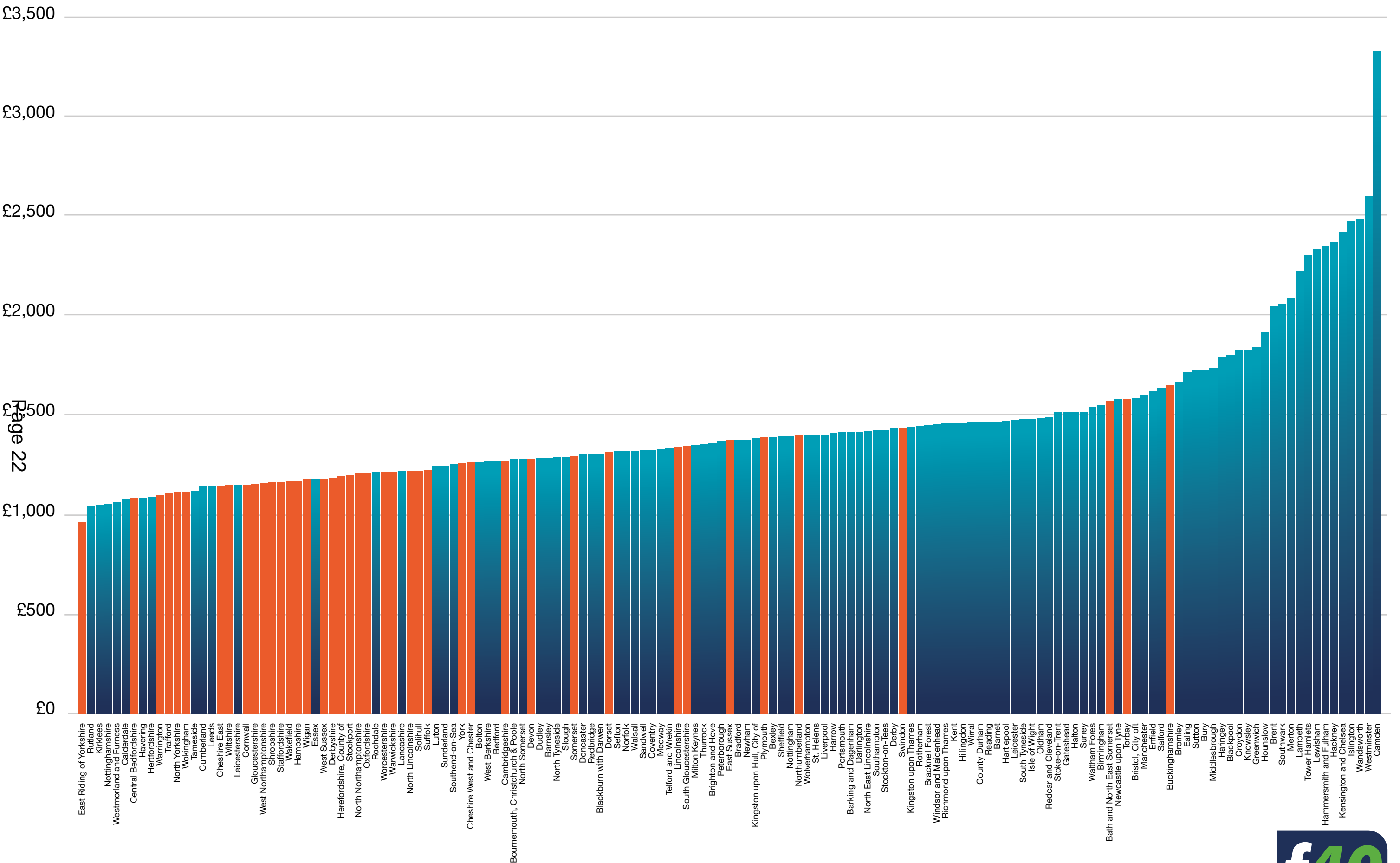
Ends

Produced by f40

For more information, contact: Secretary Karen Westcott at karen@dtw.co.uk or on 07545 210067.

For more information about f40, go to <https://www.f40.org.uk/>

Variation of High Needs Block funding per pupil allocations 2024-25 by local authority



SCHOOLS FORUM : 27 NOVEMBER 2024

AGENDA ITEM 6: DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT FINANCE REPORT

Financial Performance 2024-25 - Position at the end of September 2024

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Schools' Forum is informed of the current financial position against the Budget for 2024-25.

2 Overall Position

- 2.1 The report provides information and analysis on the financial performance and use of resources for Dedicated Schools' Grant. The Council set its budget for 2024-25 on 21 February 2024 and this report focuses on the financial performance to the end of September 2024 and the projected year end position at that point in time.

3 Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG)

- 3.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant projected revenue position at the end of August is shown below. The annual DSG allocation is currently £168.094 million after recoupment. The balance on each block at year end will transfer to or from the DSG reserve.

The forecast position is a £6.352 million overspend in year and a forecast overdraft in the reserve of £5.193 million.

Service	Budget	Forecast	Variance	Opening Reserve	Use of reserve	Closing Reserve
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Central Schools block	2.137	2.139	0.002	0.372	(0.002)	0.370
Early Years block	30.535	30.383	(0.152)	0.741	0.152	0.893
High Needs block	51.486	58.176	6.690	(1.847)	(6.690)	(8.537)
Schools block	83.936	83.748	(0.188)	1.893	0.188	2.081
Total DSG	168.094	174.446	6.352	1.159	(6.352)	(5.193)

4 The High Needs Block breakdown

Service Area	Budget	Forecast	Variance	Reported at July Schools' Forum
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Education Provided Other Than At School	1.222	1.106	(0.115)	-
Equalities and Schools	0.148	0.144	(0.003)	-
Inclusion	3.680	3.598	(0.082)	-
Independent Special Schools	7.725	7.592	(0.133)	-
SEN Top-Ups (& Deficit Budget)	17.201	24.348	7.147	6.546
SEN Additional Funding	3.749	3.945	0.195	-
SEN Personal Budgets	0.305	0.305	-	-
Primary Support Base Units	0.170	0.170	-	-
SEN Transport	1.147	1.147	-	-
Special Schools	11.352	11.352	-	-
Pupil Referral Unit	0.600	0.600	-	-
SEN Support Services	4.188	3.869	(0.319)	-
Total HNB	51.486	58.176	6.690	6.546

4.1 The anticipated High Needs Block position is £0.144 million worse than the reported position presented in September.

4.2 The High Needs block is forecasting an overspend of £6.690 million, driven by several factors:

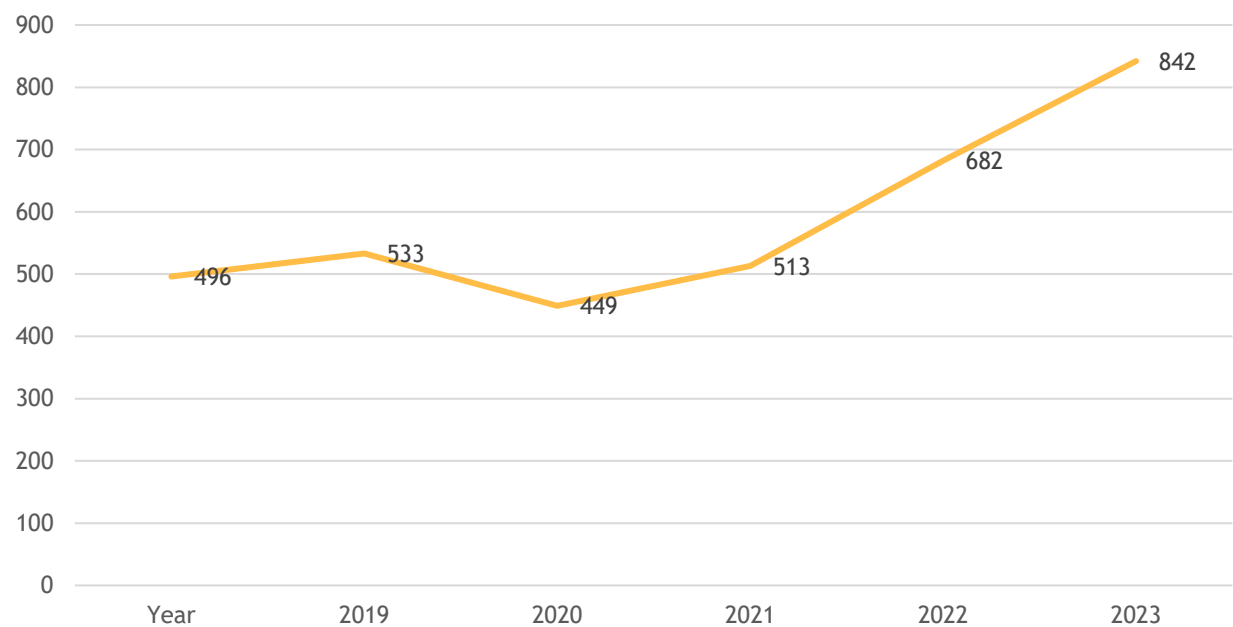
- a. The EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) services are expected to underspend by £0.118 million due to:
 - i. An overachievement of £0.097 million in income from academies for reclaiming Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) and associated high needs funding.
 - ii. A £0.021 million underspend in pupil transport costs due to changes in transport procurement and EOTAS operational strategy.
- b. The Low Incidence Needs Team and Central Support budget is forecasted to have a £0.186 million underspend, attributed to:
 - i. A £0.122 million underspend from the short-term vacancy in the Head of SEND position and the Primary School Improvement Lead being funded through School Improvement.
 - ii. A £0.100 million underspend from short-term vacant Sensory Support Team teaching posts being filled at termly intervals.
 - iii. A £0.009 million overspend on maternity cover in Pre-School Special Education, preventing excessive agency costs.
 - iv. A £0.027 million overspend across the Low Incidence Needs Teams for additional staff training, travel, and short-term agency costs.
- c. The High Incidence Needs Team is currently forecasting a £0.133 million underspend, due to:
 - i. A £0.041 million overachievement in grant income from successful renegotiations with the NHS concerning historic pay awards.
 - ii. A £0.083 million underspend in staffing costs from short-term vacancies within the team, being filled at different intervals during the academic year.
 - iii. A further £0.009 million underspend in non-staffing costs, primarily from decreased travel and training costs associated with vacant posts.
- d. The overall overspend on the High Needs Block is driven by a £7.209 million overspend due to the growth in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This forecast has increased by £0.449 million compared to August, with the number of EHCPs expected to grow from 3,949 to 4,200 by the end of 2024-25. The effect of this continued high growth can be broken down into:
 - i. A £1.247 million overspend from an increase in the quantity and level of Top Ups paid to Academies, Mainstream and Special Schools.
 - ii. A £0.133 million underspend from decreased Independent Special Schools and Out of County provision, as capacity is utilised within Northumberland Schools.
 - iii. A £0.195 million overspend on Notional SEN Payments due to more children with EHCPs in Mainstream settings.

- iv. A £5.900 million funding gap associated with growth estimates from previous years.
- e. The Inclusion Services is forecast to underspend by £0.082 million as the number of School exclusions are on trend with anticipated growth but not exceeding that. Anticipated transport costs have reduced due to the impact of independent travel and change in transport provision strategy.

SEN2 Completed January 2024 (data Jan 23 - Dec 23)

Number of Requests

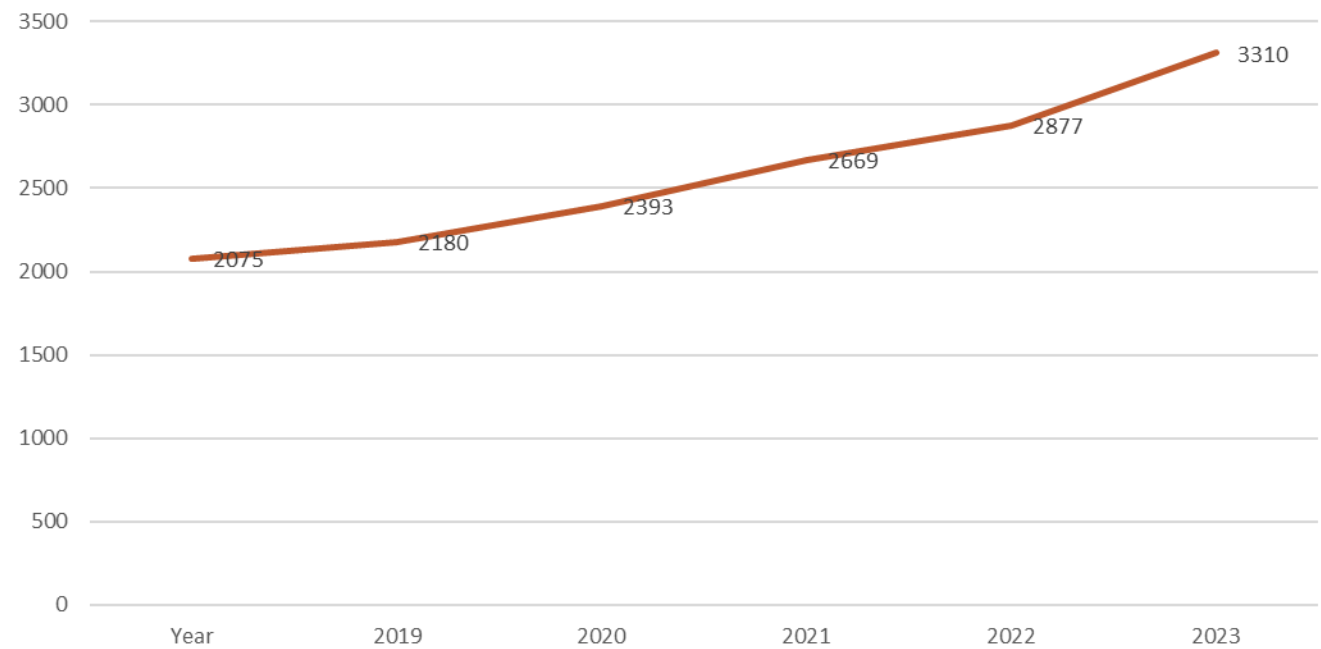
Number of New Requests



Number of Requests		
Year	Number	% Increase
2019	496	
2020	533	8
2021	449	-16
2022	513	14
2023	682	16
2024	842	23.4
2019 - 2024 % Increase		70

Active Plans

Number of Active Plans

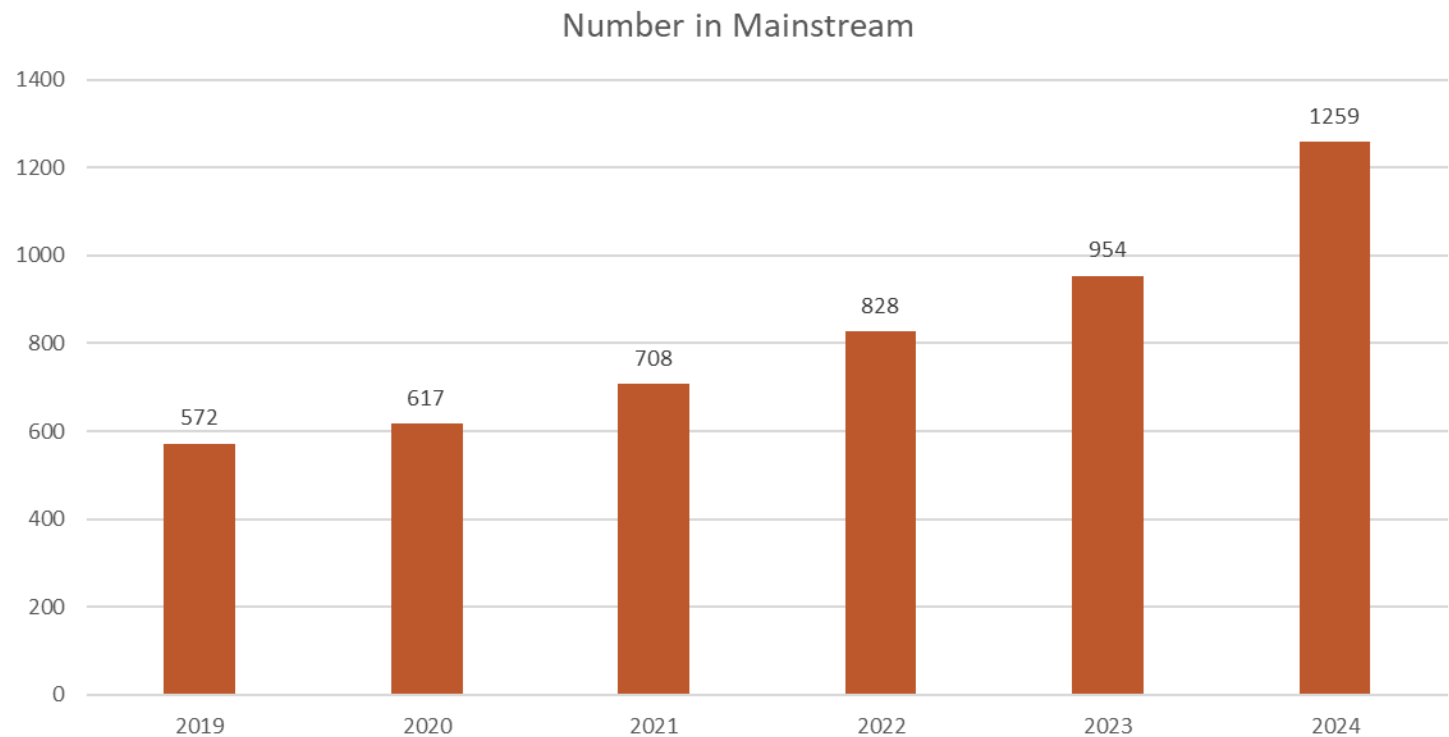


Total Number of Active Plans		
Year	Number	% Increase
2019	2075	
2020	2180	5
2021	2393	8
2022	2669	12
2023	2877	8
2024	3310	15
2019 - 2024 % Increase		60

Percentage of EHCP's in NCC and LA position

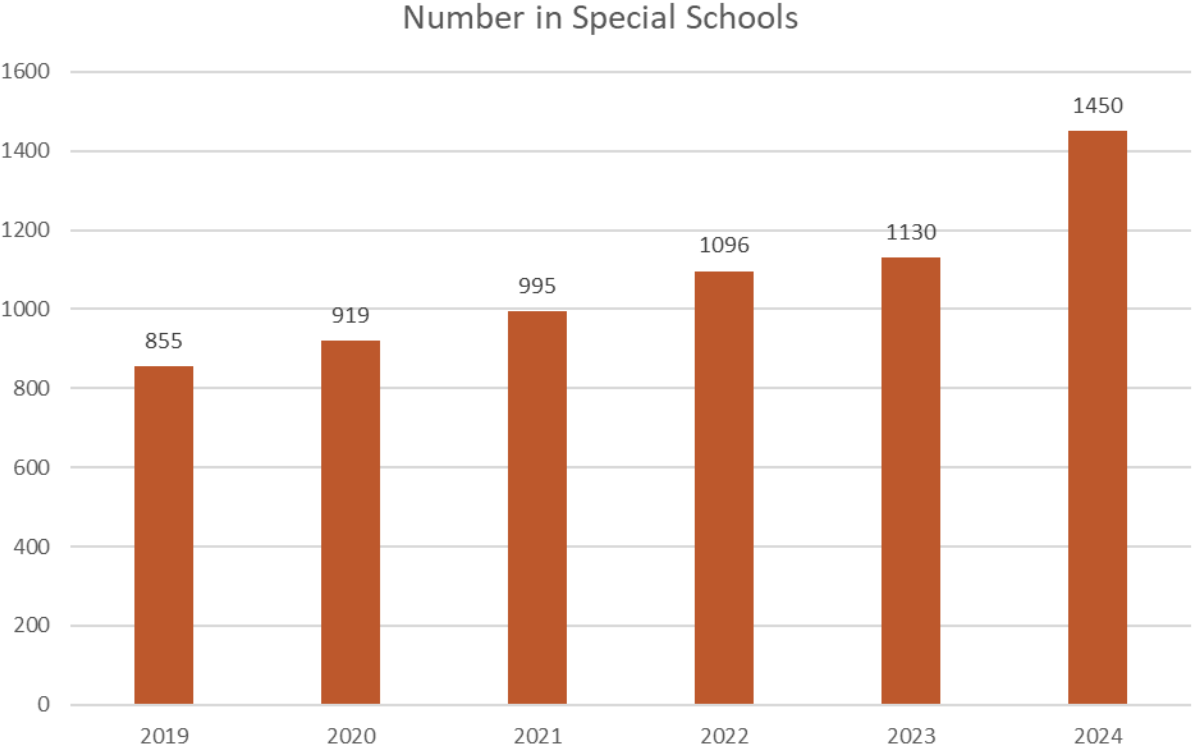
Year	NCC	National	Regional	NCC Position
2019.20	3.6	3.3	3.5	54
2020.21	4	3.7	3.8	45
2021.22	4.5	4	4.1	31
2022.23	5.1	4.3	4.6	19
2023.24	6	4.8	5	11

NUMBER IN MAINSTREAM



Number in Mainstream		
Year	Number	% Increase
2019	572	
2020	617	8
2021	708	15
2022	828	17
2023	954	15
2024	1259	32
2019 - 2024 % Increase		120

NUMBER IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS (NCC Maintained Only)



Number in Special Schools (NCC)		
Year	Number	% Increase
2019	855	
2020	919	7
2021	995	8
2022	1096	10
2023	1130	3
2024	1450	28
2019 - 2024 % Increase		70

Setting Type % of Caseload

Setting Type % Caseload	2020					2021					2022					2023					2024				
	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg
Mainstream - Academy	12.9	15.3	11.2	-2.4	1.6	14.2	16.2	12.0	-2.0	2.2	14.1	17.2	13.0	-3.1	1.0	17.2	18.8	16.1	-1.6	1.2	19.8	21.1	18.9	-1.3	0.9
Mainstream - Academy - Resourced Provision	0.0	1.4	2.2	-1.4	-2.2	0.0	1.4	1.9	-1.4	-1.9	0.1	1.5	2.6	-1.4	-2.5	0.1	1.3	2.5	-1.2	-2.4	0.1	1.3	2.6	-1.2	-2.5
Mainstream - Academy - SEN unit	0.0	0.9	0.6	-0.9	-0.6	0.0	1.0	0.8	-1.0	-0.8	0.1	0.9	0.4	-0.9	-0.3	0.0	1.0	0.6	-0.9	-0.6	0.1	0.9	0.7	-0.9	-0.7
Mainstream - Free school	0.3	0.6	0.3	-0.4	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.3	-0.5	-0.1	0.2	0.8	0.3	-0.7	-0.1	0.2	1.2	0.4	-0.9	-0.2	0.3	1.3	0.4	-1.0	-0.1
Mainstream - Free school - Resourced provision	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mainstream - Free school - SEN unit	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mainstream - Independent	0.5	1.0	0.3	-0.6	0.2	0.5	1.1	0.3	-0.6	0.3	0.8	1.1	0.3	-0.3	0.5	0.9	1.2	0.5	-0.3	0.4	0.3	1.2	0.7	-0.9	-0.3
Mainstream - LA maintained	16.4	17.4	13.5	-1.0	2.9	14.7	17.3	13.4	-2.5	1.3	17.7	16.9	13.8	0.9	3.9	16.8	16.1	11.4	0.7	5.4	17.2	15.9	11.2	1.4	6.0
Mainstream - LA maintained - Resourced provision	0.0	1.5	2.1	-1.5	-2.1	0.0	1.5	1.8	-1.5	-1.8	0.0	1.4	1.8	-1.4	-1.8	0.0	1.1	1.6	-1.1	-1.6	0.1	1.0	1.8	-1.0	-1.7
Mainstream - LA maintained - SEN unit	0.1	0.9	0.5	-0.8	-0.3	0.1	0.9	0.5	-0.8	-0.4	0.0	0.7	0.2	-0.7	-0.2	0.0	0.5	0.2	-0.5	-0.2	0.2	0.6	0.2	-0.4	-0.1
Special - Academy/free	8.4	10.8	15.0	-2.4	-6.6	8.1	11.2	14.6	-3.1	-6.5	7.2	11.5	14.1	-4.3	-6.9	7.9	11.7	14.4	-3.8	-6.6	8.3	11.8	15.0	-3.5	-6.7
Special - Independent	3.4	4.1	2.7	-0.7	0.7	4.0	4.1	2.9	-0.2	1.0	3.7	4.3	3.0	-0.6	0.7	3.7	4.2	3.0	-0.5	0.7	3.9	4.5	3.4	-0.6	0.6
Special - LA maintained	34.9	21.4	25.7	13.5	9.3	34.4	19.5	25.3	14.9	9.1	34.9	18.1	24.7	16.7	10.1	34.0	16.5	22.9	17.5	11.1	30.6	15.3	21.5	15.4	9.1
Special - Non-maintained	4.2	1.0	2.1	3.3	2.2	3.8	0.9	1.9	2.9	1.9	2.7	0.9	1.7	1.8	1.0	1.3	0.8	1.2	0.5	0.1	1.0	0.7	1.1	0.2	-0.1
NEET	2.0	2.1	2.7	-0.1	-0.8	2.8	2.5	3.5	0.3	-0.8	2.8	2.6	4.1	0.2	-1.2	2.6	2.3	3.3	0.2	-0.7	2.5	2.7	3.4	-0.2	-0.9

Negative = lower than National/Regional

Setting Type % of Caseload (other)

Page 34	Setting & % Casetype	2020					2021					2022					2023					2024				
		Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg	Local Authority	National	Regional	LA vs Nat	LA vs Reg
	Elective home education	0.4	0.8	0.3	-0.4	0.0	0.5	0.8	0.4	-0.3	0.1	0.5	0.9	0.6	-0.4	-0.1	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.1	0.3	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.2	0.5
	Other arrangements by local authority	0.6	1.0	0.9	-0.4	-0.3	0.5	1.0	0.6	-0.5	-0.1	0.6	1.1	0.3	-0.5	0.2	1.1	1.6	0.6	-0.5	0.5	1.3	1.5	1.0	-0.2	0.4
	Other arrangements by parents	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0

Negative = lower than National/Regional

Click to Filter Age Groups

All

▼

Click to Filter Plan Start Date

All

▼

Click to Filter LEA

All

▼

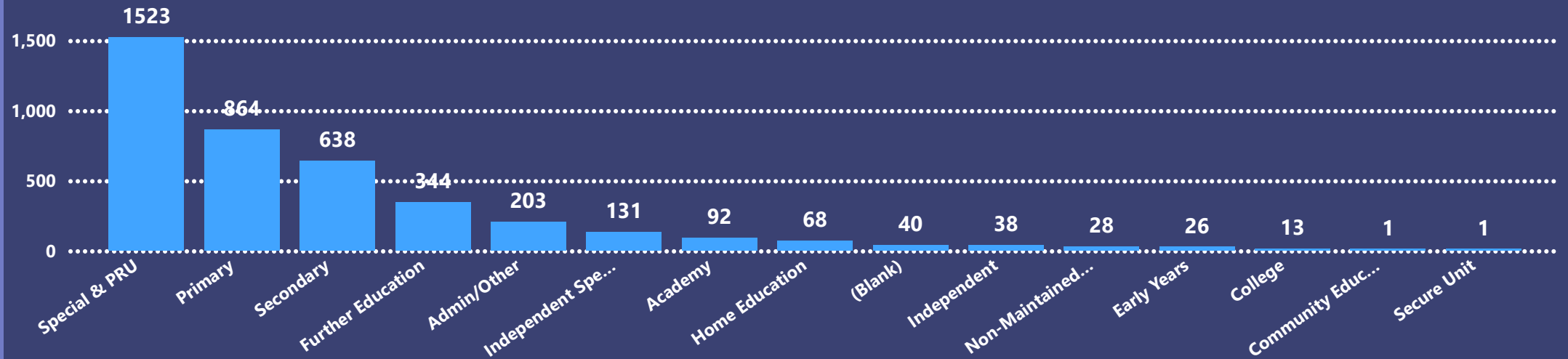
Total EHCPs

4010

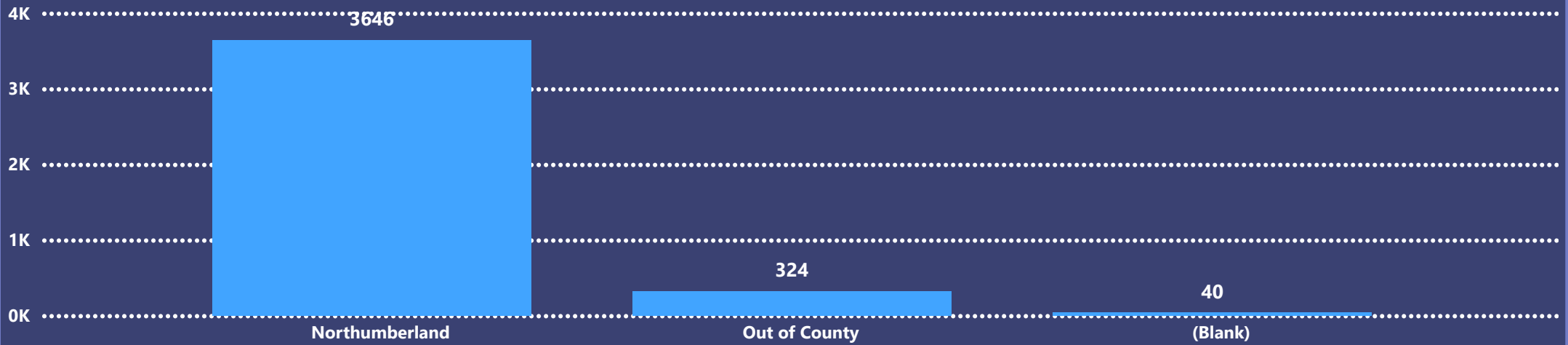
EHCPs by Age Group

e. 20 to 24	100
d. 16 to 19	774
c. 11 to 15	1566
b. 5 to 10	1409
a. 0 to 4	161
Total	4010

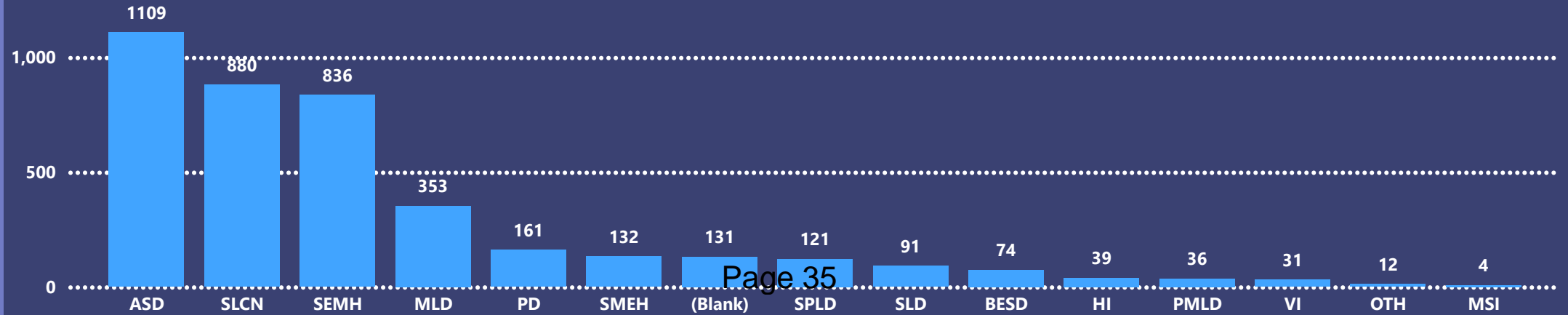
EHCPs by School Type



EHCPs by LEA



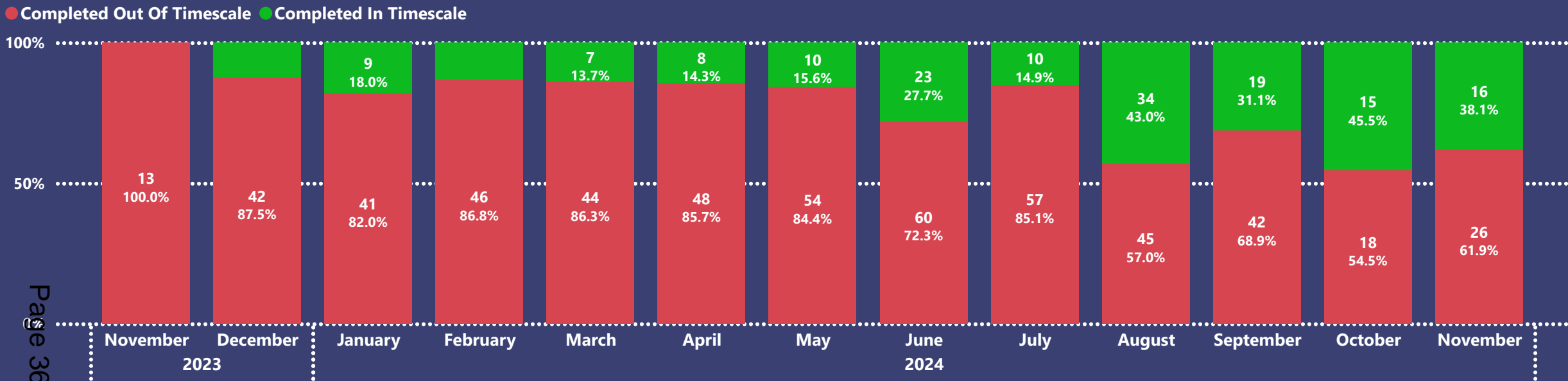
EHCPs by Primary Need



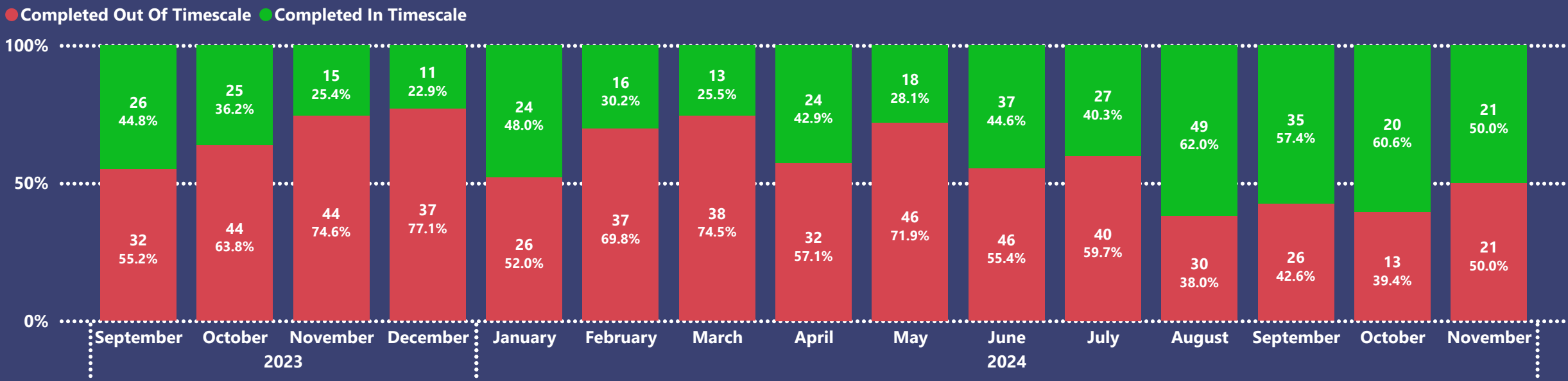
Click to Select Co-Ordinator

All

% EHCP Draft Plans Completed within 16 Weeks



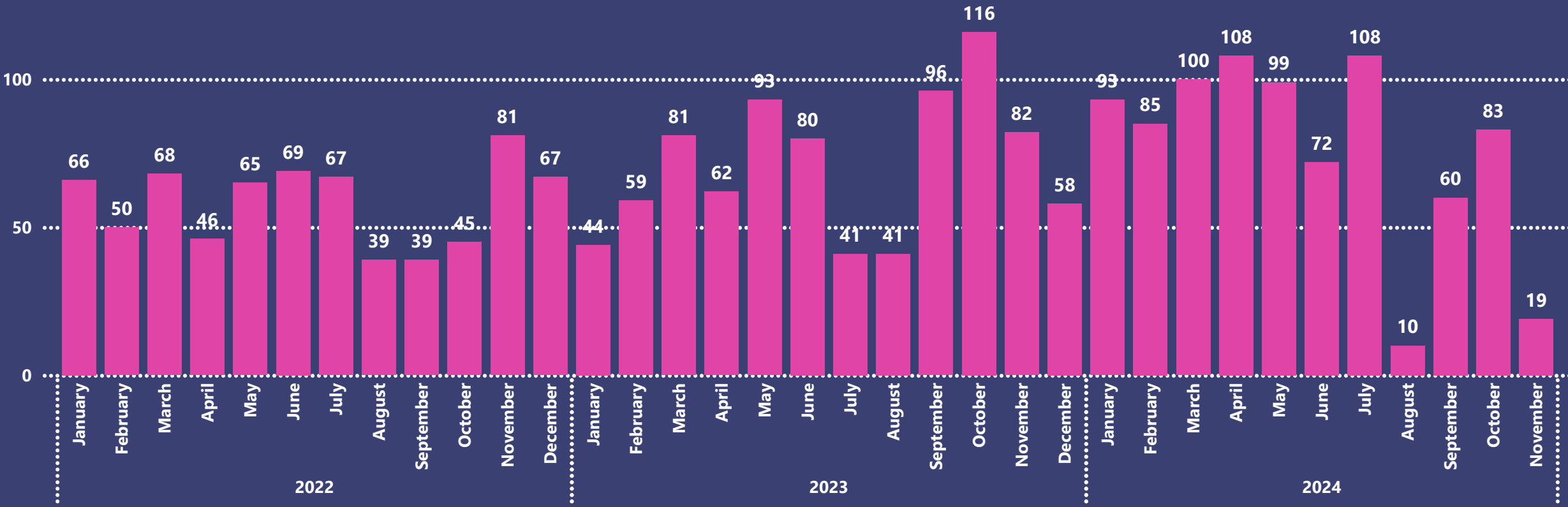
% EHCPs Completed within 20 Weeks



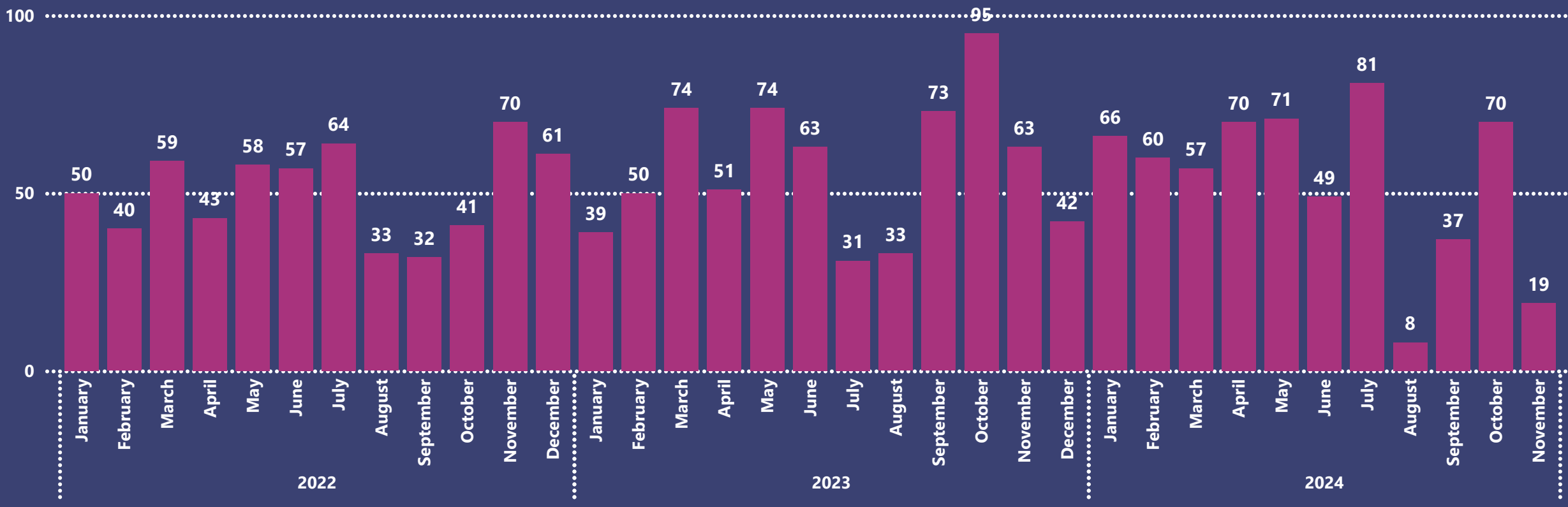
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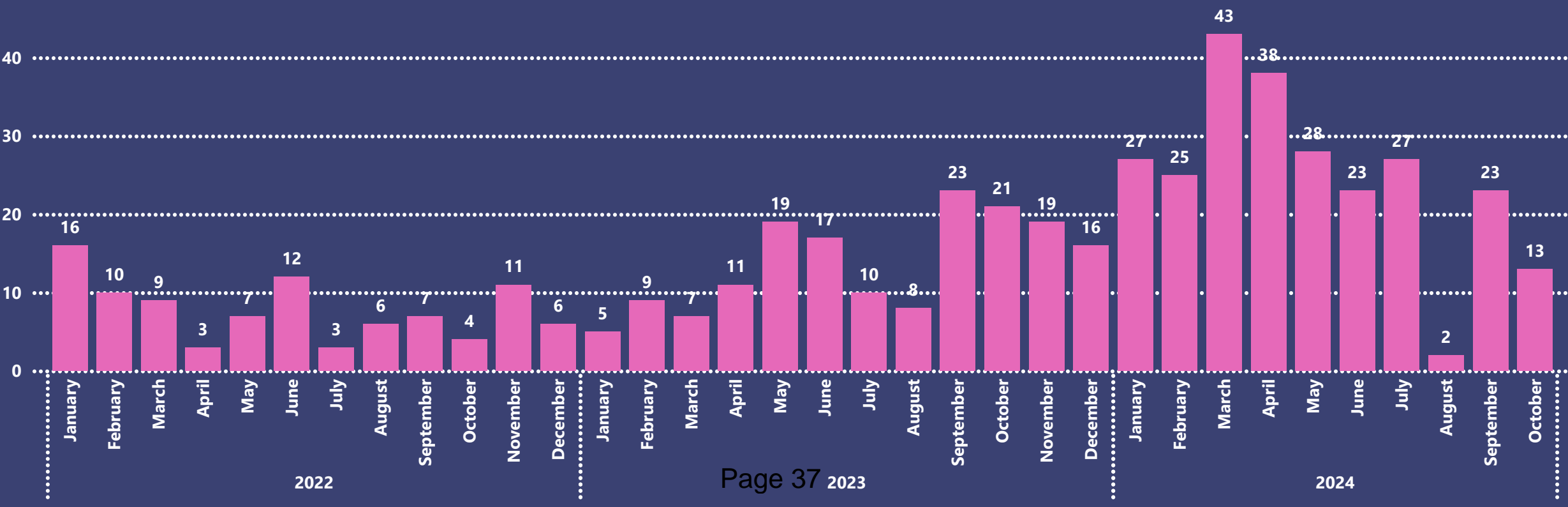
COSA Applications



COSA Approvals



COSA Refusals

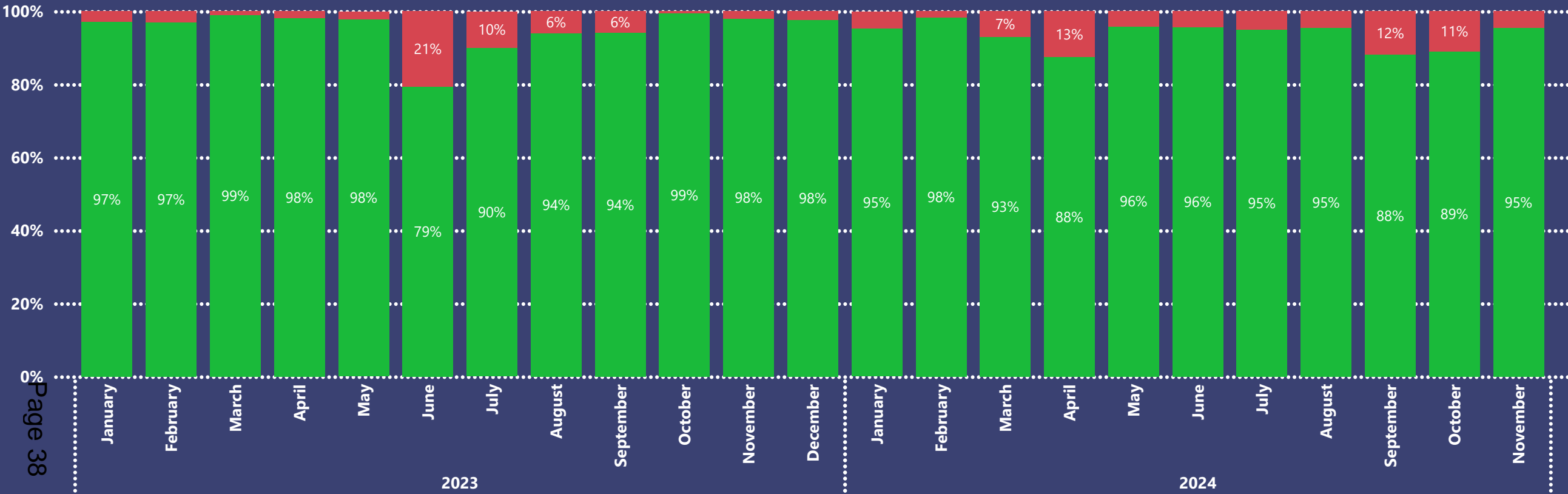


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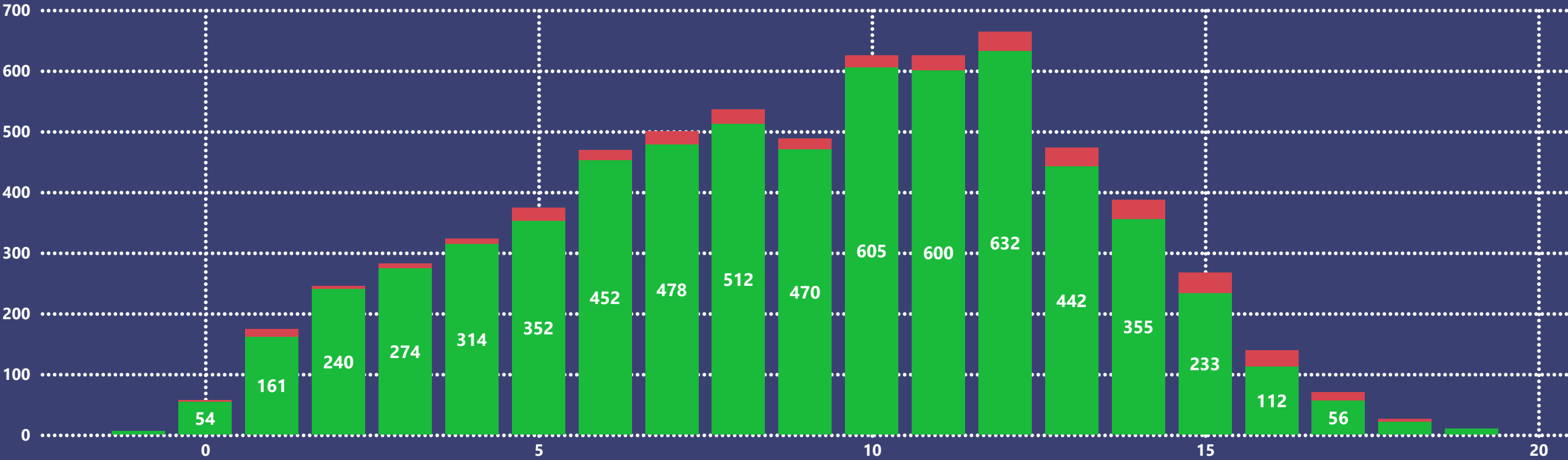
Annual Review Timescales

Earlier or On Time Not Done or Overdue



Annual Reviews by Year Group

Earlier or On Time Not Done or Overdue



Click Here to Select Age at Plan End

16

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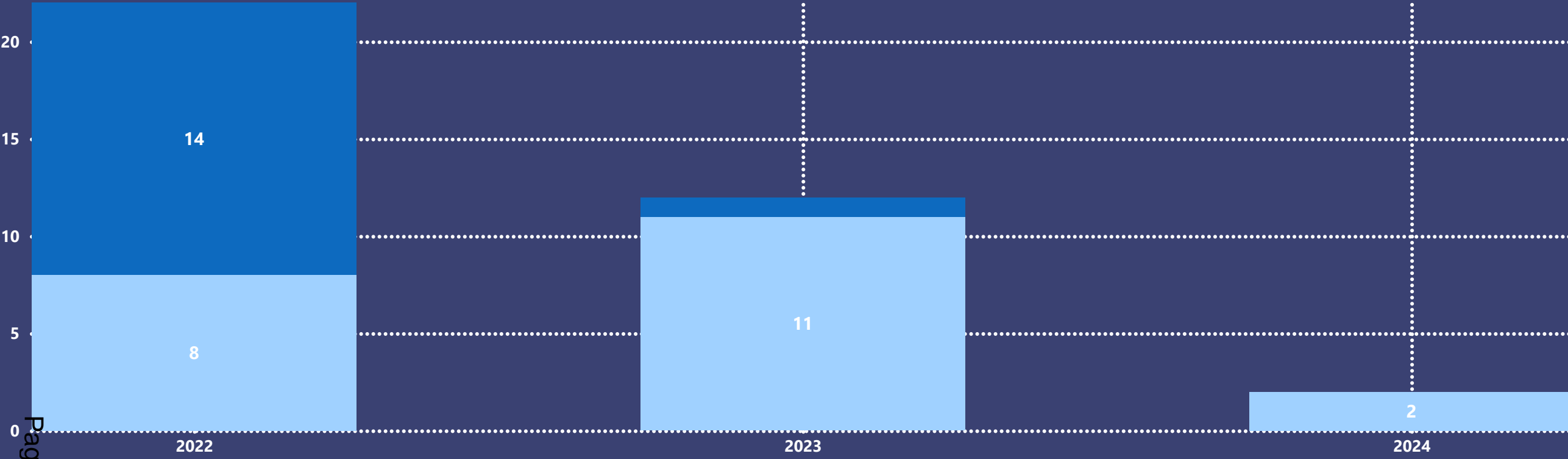
Click Here to Select Reason for Ceased Plan

All

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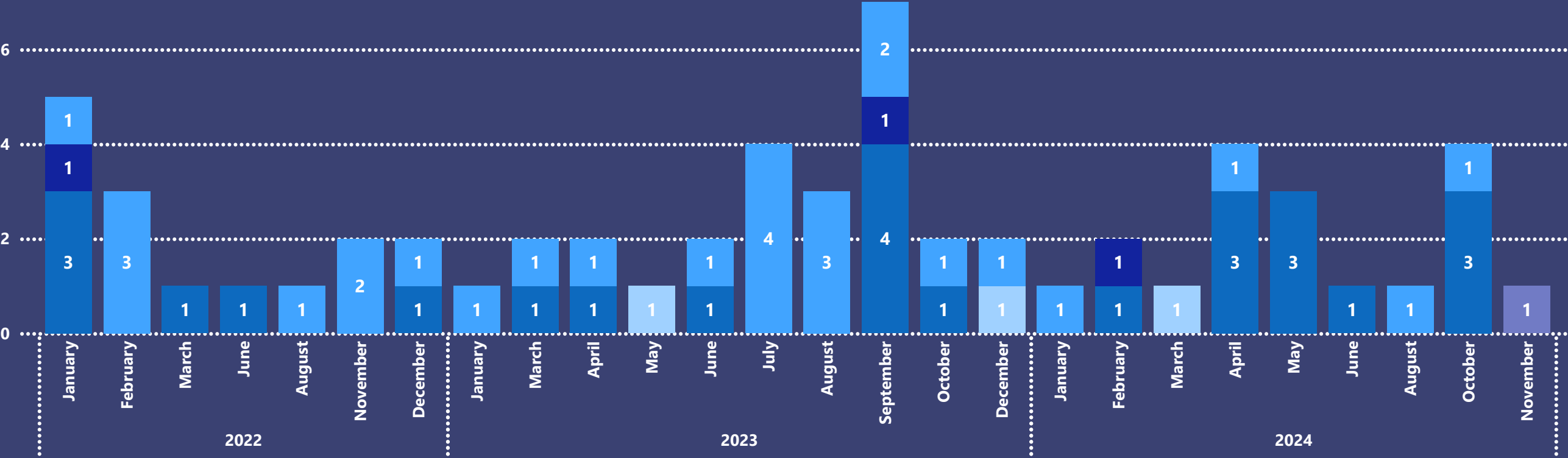
Registered Tribunals

Active Closed



Plans Ceased

Assessment Stopped Inactive after Assessment Decision Inactive after Recorded No EHCP Following Assessment Withdrawn EHCP & Withdrawn Statement



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Northumberland County Council SCHOOLS' FORUM

Agenda Item 9

27 November 2024

2025 WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING DATES

Schools Forum

Wednesday 15 January 2025: 9.30-11.30 (Provisional – Virtual Meeting)

Setting the DSG for 2025/26 – overall allocations

De-delegation decisions for 2025/26

Wednesday 19 February 2025: 9.30-11.30 (Provisional – Virtual Meeting)

Setting the DSG budget for 2025/26 – individual budgets

Wednesday 16 July 2025: 9.30-11.30 (Face to Face Meeting, Council Chamber, County Hall Morpeth)

DSG Provisional Outturn

Scheme for Financing Schools

Analysis of School Balances

Wednesday 01 October 2025: 9.30-11.30 (Virtual Meeting)

NFF Update

Review of Schools Forum Membership

Wednesday 26 November 2025: 9.30-11.30 (Virtual Meeting)

National Funding Formula Update & Consultation for 2026/27

SEN Update

High Needs Committee:

Wednesday 03 February 2025, 9.30 -11.00

Wednesday 02 July 2025, 9.30 -11.00

Wednesday 12 November 2025, 9.30 -11.00

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