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The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP

Letter sent via email to:

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Date: 1 November 2021

Dear Secretary of State for Education

High Needs Funding for Special Educational Needs

Torbay Council's ambition and commitment to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is to provide support to enable every child to achieve well in school and college, find employment and go on to live happy and fulfilled lives. To ensure that we are able to adequately support and achieve these outcomes, High Needs Funding at a sufficient level is required to meet the increased demands arising from the SEND reforms introduced in 2014.

Working in partnership with our School Forum we are discharging our duties to provide for the range of children and young people that require support. Despite the additional funding received within the higher needs block and the comprehensive work conducted at a local level to reduce costs, we continue to face an in-year deficit budget position and a growing cumulative deficit position. The current cumulative deficit held within the Dedicated Schools Grant is £5.825 million.

The position of a growing deficit is of significant concern to the Local Authority and its Schools Forum, we are taking action to work with the Education Skills and Funding Agency and looking for best practice to implement locally. However, actions we are taking are against a situation of uncertainty with no announcements on future funding settlements, delayed consultation on SEND reforms and no clarity on the future of the statutory override that exists to enable local authorities to account for deficits.

To provide certainty and an ability to forward plan with our Schools Forum we would ask that

- You complete and publish the SEND review which began in 2019 and is yet to conclude.
- Local Authorities are provided with clarity on the future of the statutory override instrument that is in place up until 31st March 2023

Local Authorities, Schools and Health Commissioners continue to face unprecedented demands and expectations when meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. The impact of the pandemic and national lockdowns is starting to and will inevitably create additional pressures on an already vulnerable cohort. To help us to best meet the needs of our young people, both today and into the future we ask you to prioritise providing us with certainty on the future reform within SEND.

If you require this in a different format or language, please contact me.



Yours sincerely

Cordelia Law

Cabinet Member for Children's Service