



Regarding partnerships, the department is currently collating a comprehensive directory of partners that work with our schools so that there is a comprehensive support network that can add value to recovery efforts. I would however add that there are considerable number of partnerships working arrangements that are in place. The work of the Cardiff Commitment programme is a good example of these partnership arrangements.

Turning to the financial settlement from Welsh Government I can confirm that on the 14th of December 2022, the Council was provided with its Provisional Budget Settlement. A Cabinet Report was considered by Cabinet on the 22nd of December 2022 which set out the latest planning assumptions and launches the Budget Consultation process. The Council is currently anticipating a 9% increase in its Revenue Support Grant which whilst higher than anticipated still results in a significant budget gap for 2023/24 totalling £23.5 million that will require financial decisions to be made such as Council Tax increases and reductions in services.

Whilst the settlement is higher, the cost pressures facing the Council next year are extraordinary and it is within this context that the Council has confirmed that, the current planning assumption for the overall delegated school budgets is a 9.3% increase. This will be subject to confirmation that the level of grant provided at the provisional stage is equally reflected at Final Settlement stage in early March 2023 and approval of the full Council no later than 10 March 2023.

In considering the 2023/24 budget for delegated schools, the Council has been minded to provide all available funding up front and therefore schools have been asked that their budget planning must accommodate all pay and general inflation (including energy) costs within the budget made available. The Council recognises that the 9.3% increase will still require difficult financial decisions to be undertaken by individual schools. However, the Cabinet has been keen to confirm that no general efficiency cut is applied to the school budget increases that have been indicated. Where any pay and general inflationary costs incurred in year differ from the allowance made within the 9.3% increase, this will be considered for adjustment as part of the delegated school budget build requirements for 2024/25. These initial budget indications represent a good financial settlement for schools for the 2023/2024 financial year.

The Committee asked for further information into reasons why anxiety is a problem for pupils and/or their families; how widespread it is; what numbers/percentage of pupils are still affected; and how persistent a problem it continues to be. It is understood from research as well as feedback from officers that increased anxiety can be attributed to many reasons and these include high expectations and pressure to succeed both within school and through social media, a world that feels scary and threatening, particularly again about what is seen in the media currently – murders, shootings, war in Ukraine, illness, and the role of social and economic deprivation. It is difficult to determine numbers precisely, a survey published by NHS Digital in September 2021, found one in six children in England had a probable mental disorder in 2021 – a similar rate to 2020 but an increase from one in nine in 2017. In a further report 52% of 17- to 23-year-olds have experienced a deterioration in mental health in the last five years (The Children's Society 18/06/2021).

There are a number of challenges faced in terms of building capacity of mental health and well-being services. These include budgets, recruitment, retention and relevant training of staff, implementation of new strategies/approaches, top-down support, and

work across professional boundaries for example, health in education, education providing services historically provided by health.

I trust this foregoing provides sufficient information to the responses requested by the Committee and I look forward to presenting an update on this area in July.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Merry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'S' and 'M'.

**Councillor / Cynghorydd Sarah Merry**  
**Deputy Leader / Dirprwy Arweinydd**  
**Cabinet Member for Education**  
**Aelod Cabinet Dros Addysg**