

Draft Budget 2015-16:

Department of Education

25 November 2014

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1. Introduction

Strategic Context - Executive

- 1.1 The Executive's *'Draft Budget 2015-16'* was announced by the Minister for Finance and Personnel on 3 November 2014. The Executive's Draft Budget provides proposed current expenditure and capital investment allocations for the 2015-16 financial year only. The announcement of the Draft Budget triggered the commencement of public consultation period, the closing date for which is **29 December 2014**. A copy of the Executive's *'Draft Budget 2015-16'* can be accessed on the Budget website: www.northernireland.gov.uk/budget.
- 1.2 The Draft Budget 2015-16 is taking place in a very difficult economic environment. As the Finance Minister stated on the 3 November 2014, between 2014-15 and 2015-16 alone, the Executive's Resource DEL budget has decreased by 1.6% in real terms. Compared with 2010-11, when the Assembly last agreed a Budget, the Executive's spending power has been reduced by around £1.5bn as a direct result of the year on year erosion of the Block grant by the British Government.

Strategic Context - Department of Education

- 1.3 It is important to set out the strategic context in respect of the detrimental impact of the final Budget 2011-15 on the Department of Education. Over the four year budget period, DE incurred a total cash terms reduction in its Resource budget of £125m compared to the opening 2010-11 baseline; which translates into a 13.6% real terms Resource budget reduction, as compared to 2010-11.
- 1.4 The Minister met with the Finance Minister in November 2011 to reinforce how seriously constrained the Resource budget position was and the direct impact it would have on frontline services. The initial DE 2011-15 Savings Delivery Plan required over £300m of savings to be achieved over the budget period. Following talks convened with the First and Deputy First Ministers the Minister was successful, in January 2012, in securing an additional £120m

directly for school budgets, allocated over the remaining three years of the 2011-15 Budget period (£30m: 2012-13; £15m: 2013-14 and £75m: 2014-15). He has further ensured that the £75m allocation in 2014-15, which originally was time-bounded, has now been permanently added to the Education baseline for 2015-16.

Purpose

- 1.5 The purpose of this paper is to set out an initial assessment of the impact of the Draft 2015-16 Budget for the Department of Education (DE). The public consultation period on the Department's proposals runs concurrently with the public consultation on the Executive's Draft Budget.

Impact

- 1.6 The outworkings of the Draft Budget 2015-16 for the Department of Education are summarised below:
- The Resource Budget faces a **funding gap of £162.5m or 8.4%**;
 - The Capital Budget has been **reduced by £36.1m or 19.7%**.
- 1.7 Managing reductions of this scale presents very real and significant challenges. While the Minister is determined to protect frontline services as far as possible, in the scenario presented above, maintaining all core services at current levels is simply not deliverable.

2. Consultation Arrangements

- 2.1 This document is available on the Department's website at: www.deni.gov.uk and is subject to public consultation until **29 December 2014**.
- 2.2 During that time, the Department intends to engage with the Assembly Education Committee and key stakeholders across the education sector to discuss the potential impact of the draft Budget, with a view to building a consensus on mapping the way forward for education. The Department will be working with its non-departmental public bodies on the likely impacts for services from the proposed reductions and how the front-line services may be protected as far as possible.
- 2.3 This is a Draft Budget and the Minister will continue to press for additional resources for Education.
- 2.4 The Department is interested in hearing views on any aspects of this document. In consulting with stakeholders, the Department is keen to hear views on:
- the Draft Budget 2015-16 proposed budget Resource and Capital allocations for Education;
 - the Resource Budget: Proposed Budget Reductions; and
 - other opportunities to improve services and secure efficiencies.

Contact Details

- 2.5 Should you wish to make comments in relation to any of the issues contained within this document, responses would be appreciated by email to:

E-mail: budgetconsultation@deni.gov.uk

Alternatively, if you wish to post any comments, the address is:

**DE Draft Budget 2015-16 Consultation
Room 501
Rathgael House
Rathgill
Balloo Road
BANGOR
BT19 7NA**

- 2.6 In order to promote environmental sustainability, respondents will not receive an acknowledgement letter. A list of respondents will be placed on the Department's website along with copies of responses (in full or in part). If you do not wish your response or name to be published on the website, please make this clear in your response to us.
- 2.7 All interested parties are encouraged to make their responses as soon as possible before the consultation closing date of **29 December 2014**. If this document is not in a format which suits your needs, please let us know.

3. Draft Budget 2015-16 Outcome

3.1 In comparison to the 2014-15 opening baseline, the Draft Budget 2015-2016 presents significant challenges to the strategic planning and delivery of education across the entire community. The overall allocations for Resource and Capital expenditure are as follows:

Table 1: Draft Budget – Proposed DE Resource and Capital Allocations

	2014-15 Opening Baseline £m	2015-16 Draft Budget Allocation £m	Reduction £m
Resource	1,943.7	1,849.3	94.4
% change against 2014-15 baseline			(4.9%)
Capital	182.9	146.8	36.1
% change against 2014-15 baseline			(19.7%)

Draft Resource Allocation

3.2 The Department's Resource Budget allocation covers funding associated with providing education and youth services recurrently (for example, pay, operating costs etc). The 4.9% baseline reduction in 2015-16 presents a very significant challenge. The Department needs to have budget reduction measures capable of realising significant reductions within one year; to ensure it balances its Resource budget in 2015-16.

3.3 It is also important to note that inescapable cost pressures, associated with pay increases, price inflation, meeting statutory and contractual commitments, and addressing demographic impacts in 2015-16, mean that the level of reductions required is considerably greater than just the reductions in the cash position relative to the 2014-15 opening baseline.

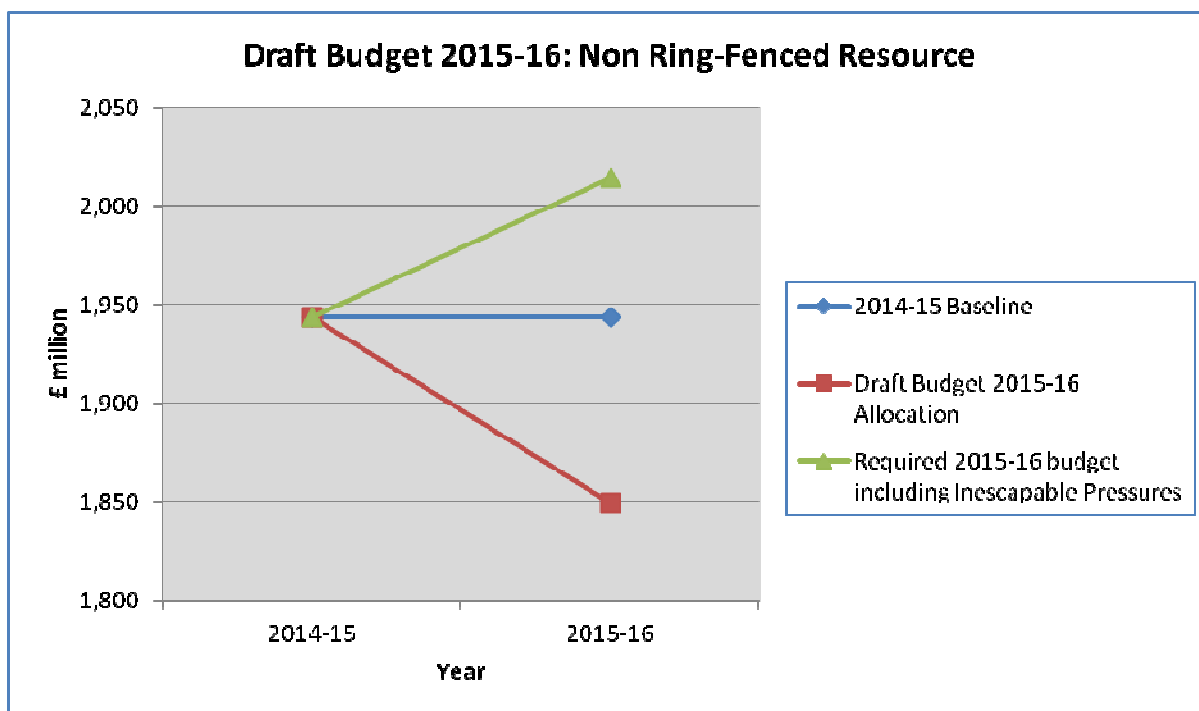
3.4 The shortfall between the Department’s anticipated 2015-16 Resource Budget spending requirements and the draft Budget 2015-16 allocations, once these inescapable pressures are taken into account, is outlined below.

Table 2: Gap between DE Draft 2015-16 Resource Budget Allocations and Anticipated Requirements

	£m
Opening 2014-15 Resource baseline	1,943.7
Add: 2015-16 Inescapable pressures	68.1
Required 2015-16 Resource budget	2,011.8
Less: Draft 2015-16 Resource allocation	(1,849.3)
2015-16 Funding Gap	162.5

3.5 This funding gap of £162.5m represents **8.4%** of the opening 2014-15 baseline budget of £1.943.7m.

Figure 1: Gap between DE Draft Budget Outcome and DE Required Resource Budget



3.6 The Resource budget reduction measures outlined in this document therefore reflect the £162.5m level of reductions required for the Department to manage its resource budget in 2015-16.

Draft Capital Allocation

3.7 Capital allocations support investments in education assets, including School and Youth facilities, which will provide or underpin services in the longer term. The schools estate consists of c1,200 schools with an asset valuation of over £3bn.

3.8 Over the last number of years the Department has built up a significant pipeline of projects many of which are advancing through the planning and design stages of delivery. The proposed reduction in capital spending of 19.7% set out in Table 1 above will impact on the Department’s ability to deliver some projects currently planned for 2015-16.

3.9 The proposed capital allocation for the Department is analysed in the table below:

Table 3: Draft Budget 2015-16 – Proposed DE Capital Allocation

	Receipts £m	Capital DEL £m	TBUC £m	Total £m
Draft 2015-16 Capital allocation	(0.5)	135.5	11.8	146.8

3.10 The ‘Together: Building a United Community’ (TBUC) allocation of £11.8m is ring-fenced and covers proposed spend at Lisanelly and three Integrated Primary Schools. This is in line with the current levels of spend anticipated in 2015-16.

3.11 The proposed Capital DEL budget of £135.5m is significantly below the equivalent figure of £177.5m in 2014-15. Table 4 below shows the proposed

split of this budget across the various capital programmes. A commentary on the impact of the proposed allocations is given in subsequent paragraphs.

Table 4: Draft Budget 2015-16 – Proposed Capital Allocation by Programme

Capital DEL	2015/16 £m	2015/16 £m
Major Capital Programme	55.0	
Schools' Enhancement Programme (SEP)	40.0	
Minor Works (inc. facilities improvement)	25.0	
Youth Programme	10.5	
Energy Efficiency	0	
Other Capital (Transport, ICT, Vesting etc.)	5.0	
Sub-Total		135.5
TBUC - Lisanelly/Arvalee/3xIntegrated PS		11.8
Capital Receipts		(0.5)
Total		146.8

Major Capital Programme/TBUC Capital Programmes

3.12 In order to minimise the impact on longer term projects these major capital programmes have been prioritised. However this exacerbates the position with other capital programmes where the reductions will be disproportionately high, particularly in the School Enhancement and Minor Works Programmes.

School Enhancement Programme (SEP)

3.13 Fifty school enhancement projects are currently being progressed, all of which were planned to be on-site during 2015-16 with a projected spend of over £85m. Given the reductions to the level of capital available to DE, a budget of only £40m will now be available for SEP projects.

Minor Works Programme

- 3.14 This programme is the means by which the majority of schools within the estate can access capital for essential works. (The Major Works Programme and the SEP cover around 100 of the c1,200 schools in the estate.)
- 3.15 Historically spend on Minor Works across the estate has been in the order of £60-£70m per annum, though in 2014-15 it has been possible to expand this significantly to a value of c£120m. Given the reductions proposed, Minor Works spend in 2015-16 will be restricted to £25m. As much of this represents the completion of works commenced in 2014-15, the ability to implement new works will be constrained.

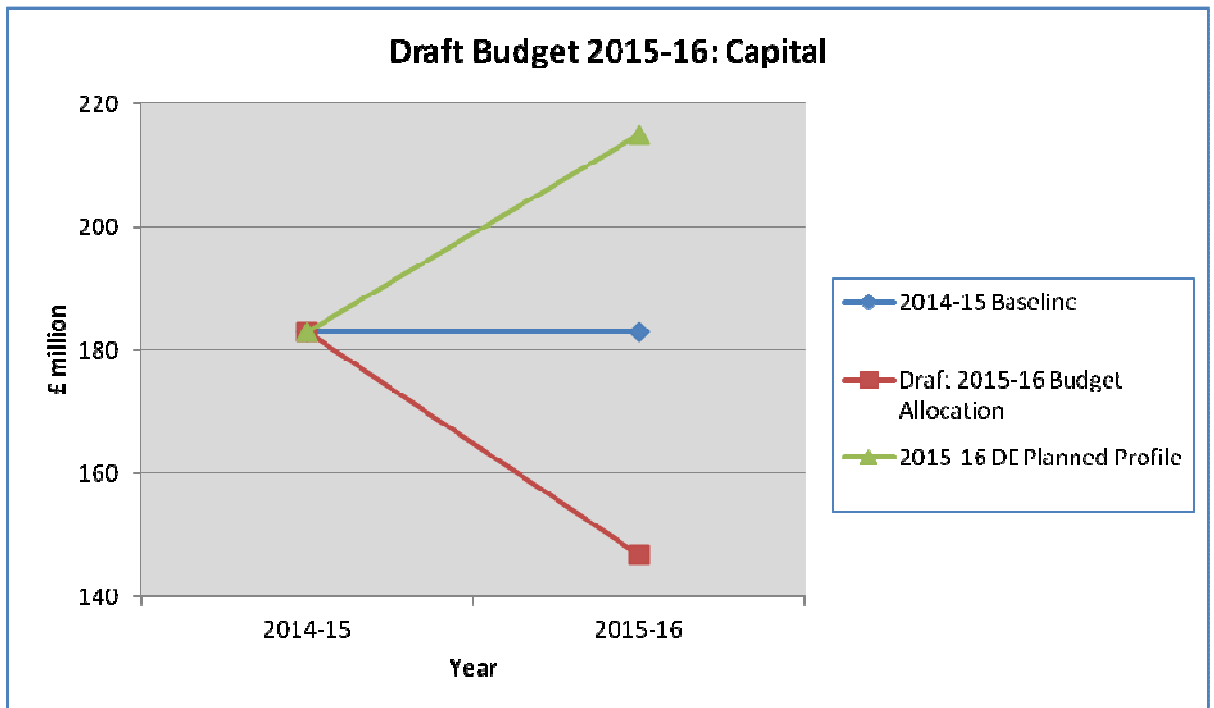
Youth Capital

- 3.16 The Youth Capital programme will be constrained slightly by the proposed reductions in budget. Following the announcement in November 2013 of a programme of voluntary youth projects, spend of over £15m on Youth Capital projects was anticipated in 2015-16. Although this will be constrained to £10.5m, this represents an increase on the level of spend of c£6.5m in 2014-15.

Other Capital Programmes

- 3.17 Capital spend in non-construction areas such as ICT, Transport, Land Vesting etc. will be reduced to minimal levels. Also, no funding will be available to follow-on from the £10m Energy Efficiency Programme currently being implemented in 2014-15.

Figure 2: Gap between DE Draft Budget 2015-16 Capital Allocations and DE Planned Profile



4. Strategic Priorities for Education

- 4.1 The Department's vision is for "an education system that is recognised internationally for the quality of its teaching and learning and for the achievement of its young people, and of an education service that has at its centre a focus on the needs of children and young people".
- 4.2 The Department wants to see every young person achieving to his or her potential at each stage of his or her development. This is supported by the following five goals:
- Raising standards for all;
 - Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equity;
 - Developing the education workforce;
 - Improving the learning environment; and
 - Transforming the governance and management of education.
- 4.3 The Department's primary statutory duty is to promote the education of our young people and to ensure the effective implementation of education policy.
- 4.4 A key emphasis is to ensure that every learner fulfils their full potential. Equality of opportunity is therefore central, not only in relation to Section 75 groups but to any children or young people affected by educational disadvantage.
- 4.5 DE's budget allocation is to provide for the delivery of the Department's objectives and to support the priorities outlined in the Executive's Programme for Government.
- 4.6 Raising educational standards and closing the gaps in performance are not only fundamental objectives for DE: good educational outcomes at all levels are a key determinant in achieving sustainable, long-term economic growth in the region, and promotes wealth and job-creation to the benefit of all citizens. Delivering a stable economic base and rebalancing our economy will only be possible with increased education and skills levels among the current and future workforce by ensuring better outcomes for all pupils, particularly in terms of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

4.7 The future success of our economy and of society in general depends on there being a high quality education service that can compete with the best internationally. Equally, all of our young people have the right to a quality education that enables them to reach their full potential, a right enshrined not only in our own legislation but in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. And, quite properly, the Executive has prioritised early intervention as the best means of addressing wider economic, health and societal problems. The Education Minister has invested significantly in supporting our young people, especially those who are vulnerable or at risk of exclusion, to do well educationally and we are now starting to see improvements that will have a long-term impact across all of the Executive's priorities.

Outcomes

4.8 Much has been achieved in recent years and the Department is keen to build on these successes:

- New legislation has been progressed to support the establishment of a new Education Authority to replace Education and Library Boards and support the rationalisation and improvement of education administration and service delivery;
- Over half a billion pounds has been committed to new build projects for more than 50 schools since June 2012. In March 2014 the Minister also announced that 50 schools would benefit from the School Enhancement Programme (SEP) representing an investment of £134m;
- Allocation of an additional £10m in 2014-15 to the Aggregated Schools Budget for Targeting Social Need;
- The first phase of construction of the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus is the Arvalee School and Resource Centre, for pupils with special educational needs. Work has begun to prepare the site and construction on the new Arvalee School is expected to begin early next year, with development of the overall site also continuing;
- Area Planning has been taken forward by the Education and Library Boards, working in close conjunction with CCMS and the other sectors. Area Plans have been prepared, consulted on and published for post-

primary and primary provision. The area planning process will develop a network of viable and sustainable schools capable of delivering high quality education appropriate to the needs of the children and young people in an area;

- The number of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs A*-C (inc. equivalents) including GCSE English and Maths has increased from 13,438 (54.2%) in 2006-07 to 14,303 (62.2%) in 2012-13;
- Schools continue to work towards the full implementation of the Entitlement Framework, with 87% of schools meeting the 2014 Key Stage 4 milestone of offering 21 courses;
- Shared education is being progressed. A Ministerial Advisory Group explored the area and made a series of recommendations in April 2013 with the aim of assisting the Department in ensuring all children have the opportunity to participate in shared education programmes and in substantially increasing the number of schools sharing facilities;
- As part of the Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' initiative, the Minister opened a shared education campuses programme with a commitment to deliver 10 shared education campuses. In July 2014 the Minister announced that three campuses would proceed in planning and in October he opened a second call for expressions of interest. It is intended to announce the second phase of successful projects in June 2015;
- The 'Education Works' campaign, launched in September 2012, aims to inform and engage parents and families, in particular those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, to become more engaged in their child's education. Having already targeted families of young children, the campaign has now moved on to target parents of post-primary school children. The campaign provides parents with consistent, authoritative information on schooling and the steps they can take to support their child in achieving good educational outcomes;
- OFMDFM and DE have invested £16.7million to improve literacy and numeracy levels in schools as part of the Delivering Social Change programme. In total, 270.6 full time equivalent recent graduate teachers are now in post in 291 schools – 151 primary schools and 140 post

primary schools. The programme delivers support to pupils in primary schools who are at risk of underachievement in numeracy and literacy. It is also providing support to post primary pupils to achieve at least a grade C GCSE in English and/or maths;

- The extension in the free school meals eligibility criteria in 2010-11 and 2011-12 has resulted in around 17,000 additional nursery and primary age pupils being eligible for a free meal. The further extension to the post-primary sector in September 2014 has meant an additional 12,000 pupils have become eligible for free school meals and the school uniform grant. The introduction of the primary school uniform grant in 2009-10 has meant that an additional 50,000 pupils have been able to avail of the grant.

Education Authority

- 4.9 The Executive agreed on 9 September 2014 that the commitment to establish the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) should be withdrawn from the current Programme for Government and that a new Education Bill should be drafted. The new Education Bill completed its passage in the Assembly on 17 November 2014.
- 4.10 The Bill seeks to make education administration compatible with the new district council structure, which takes effect from 1 April 2015. It provides for the establishment of a single Education Authority to replace the five Education and Library Boards and their Staff Commission. CCMS, CCEA and the Youth Council will be unaffected by the provisions in the Education Bill. The Bill also provides for the Department to fund a sectoral body to represent the interests of controlled schools.

5. Resource Budget: Inescapable Pressures and Proposed Reductions

5.1 There is no doubt that the reductions in the Education Resource Budget will pose a major challenge to the education sector, as a whole, during 2015-16. It is important that in meeting that challenge the key issues of raising standards and delivering frontline services are maintained wherever possible and that the finite resources available are prioritised carefully and used to greatest effect.

Inescapable Pressures

5.2 The Minister is proposing to make the following Resource allocations to address inescapable pressures in 2015-16:

Table 5: Listing of DE Draft Budget 2015-16 Inescapable Pressures

	£m
Annual increase in staff pay costs	28.0
ELB Block Grant: Special Education Needs pressures	10.0
Aggregated Schools Budget: Targeting Social Needs funding	10.0
Non pay inflationary pressures	7.2
Furniture & equipment: New Major works	4.0
CCEA: Revision of GCSE specifications	3.2
Free School Meal Entitlement: post primary	2.0
Special Education Needs : Roll out of Early Years	1.4
Other	2.3
Total	68.1

5.3 In making the above allocations the Minister is continuing to tackle social disadvantage through Targeting Social Needs, by allocating a further £10m in 2015-16 to the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB). This is in addition to the £10m he allocated to the ASB in 2014-15 as part of the Review of the Common Funding Scheme. As noted above, the extension of the Free School Meal Entitlement criteria to the post-primary sector, in September 2014, has

meant an additional 12,000 pupils have become eligible for free school meals and the school uniform grant.

- 5.4 The Minister is also committed to ensuring that support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is prioritised as much as possible. While the preparatory work and capacity building for schools linked to the introduction of the new SEN Framework will now need to be delivered over a longer period than anticipated, the Minister is proposing to provide an additional £10m to ELBs to enable them to continue to meet the needs of children with statements of special educational needs. Recognising the particular effectiveness of early identification and early intervention, he is also working to prioritise the continuation of early years SEN capacity building.

Proposed Budget Reductions

- 5.5 It is essential that significant budget reductions are realised quickly if the Department of Education is to balance its 2015-16 Resource budget and clearly this will be a sizeable task. To do so, while maintaining the drive to raise standards and to address inequalities in education outcomes will put a premium on vision, strategic leadership and effective delivery.
- 5.6 Nearly four fifths of the Education budget relates to the Aggregated Schools Budget and the Education and Library Boards' Block Grant. These budgets provide the core funding for individual schools and for Special Education, School Meals and Transport respectively. Hence making reductions of at least 8.4%, without directly impacting upon such services, would be impossible without placing an unsustainable level of reduction on the remainder of the Education budget.
- 5.7 In determining strategic priorities the Minister's focus has been on protecting these frontline services as far as possible, promoting equality and raising education standards.
- 5.8 The proposed budget reductions therefore seek to drive up efficiency, reduce bureaucracy and eliminate duplication. However the scale of the budget reductions required in 2015-16 means that these cannot be delivered through

efficiency savings alone, especially in light of the savings already delivered to date during the Budget 2011-15 period. In a tight financial context, very difficult choices have to be made.

- 5.9 It is unavoidable, given the scale of the budget reductions required in 2015-16, and the fact that over three quarters of the Education budget is spent directly on salary-related costs that there will be implications for jobs. The Minister is determined, in setting out the proposed Resource Budget reductions, that the impact on jobs should be mitigated as far as possible. However, this will be very challenging. The implications for jobs will be considered further, in light of the responses to this consultation, the Workforce Restructuring Executive Paper and the decisions of the Executive on the Final Budget 2015-16 allocations.
- 5.10 The constrained Resource budget position for Education in 2015-16 underlines the importance of ensuring that there is a strategically planned estate of sustainable schools. While respecting diversity in education, there is clearly considerable scope for a more coherent approach to area based planning based on a network of viable and sustainable schools.
- 5.11 The Minister is proposing to make the following Resource budget reductions in 2015-16, in order to address the 8.4% funding gap identified at paragraph 3.5 above, in order to deliver a balanced Resource budget in 2015-16.

Table 6: Listing of proposed DE Draft Budget 2015-16 Reductions

	2015-16 Reduction £m
ELB Block Grant	20.0
Contingency fund	9.2
Procurement: Goods & Services	8.0
Smaller NDPBs	3.7
Third Party Organisations	2.4
Earmarked Funding	6.3
Schools Maintenance	3.0
Entitlement Framework	2.0
Release of Severance funding	10.0
Meals: Nutritional Standards	4.7
Departmental Administration	3.0
Other Spending Areas	11.5
Aggregated Schools Budget	78.7
Total	162.5

ELB Block Grant

5.12 The proposed reduction of £20m represents a cut of 5%. This proposed reduction is below the overall 2015-16 Resource Budget funding gap of 8.4% and would be offset by the inescapable pressure of £10m in recognition of SEN related pressures (see Table 5).

Contingency fund

5.13 The Minister had previously prudently allocated £9.2m in 2014-15 to address unforeseen contingencies, in line with HMT guidance. Due to the scale of the required 2015-16 budget reductions, it is proposed that this funding would now be released.

Procurement: Goods & Services

5.14 The Department will continue to seek to ensure best value for money in the procurement of goods & services within the education sector, with a planned reduction in spending in 2015-16 of £8.0m.

Smaller NDPBs

5.15 A total of £3.7m is proposed to be reduced. This will be deducted primarily from CCEA: £3m with the balance being found from the other, smaller NDPBs. The expectation would be that these reductions would apply as far as possible to back office and administrative functions and that all possible steps would be taken to minimise the impact on the frontline services delivered by these bodies. The CCEA reduction would be offset by the £3.2m inescapable pressure (see Table 5).

Third Party Organisations

5.16 In order to protect delegated schools budget as far as possible the Department is proposing to reduce and/or cease funding for several standalone initiatives provided for pupils by third party organisations.

Earmarked Funding

5.17 This is funding which is earmarked by the Department to address a specific policy initiative. The proposed budget reductions are analysed below:

	£m
Safeguarding & Behaviour	1.0
ICT in Schools	1.1
Community Relations	1.1
Other (< £1m)	3.1
Total	6.3

Schools Maintenance

5.18 It is proposed that the opening 2014-15 baseline of £17m would be reduced by £3m (15%).

Entitlement Framework

5.19 The proposed reduction of £2m represents a 29% reduction on the opening 2014-15 budget of £6.9m. The Minister has listened to schools' views on the importance of retaining some earmarked funding to support the implementation of the Entitlement Framework. Rather than removing the budget entirely he is proposing to make available an allocation of £4.9m for 2015-16.

Release of Severance Funding

5.20 The Minister had previously prudently allocated £10m in 2014-15 for severance funding. However he expects all severance costs in 2015-16 will be funded from the £100m central pot which has been set aside by the Executive for a severance programme for both the NICS and the wider public sector.

Meals: Nutritional Standards

5.21 It is proposed that the opening 2014-15 baseline of £4.7m would be reduced in full (100%). This funding was provided previously to assist schools to implement the compulsory nutritional standards for school lunches (in place since 2007) and the nutritional standards for other food and drinks provided in schools (in place since 2008). The Department will continue to work with schools/catering service to implement the standards by seeking to achieve greater efficiency where practicable in providing school food.

Departmental Administration

5.22 This involves reduction in staff management and administration costs. The proposed reduction of £3m represents a 9% reduction. This proposed reduction is above the overall 2015-16 Resource Budget funding gap of 8.4%.

Other Spending Areas

5.23 In order to help address the 2015-16 funding gap, it will be necessary to make reductions totalling £11.5m to other spending areas as outlined below:

	£m
Extended Schools	1.0
Special Education Needs: Capacity Building*	3.0
Early Years: Surestart	2.0
Youth	3.0
Pre School Education	2.5
Total	11.5

* See paragraph 5.4 above.

Aggregated Schools Budget

5.24 The Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB) accounts for c£1.1bn of the 2014-15 total DE Resource budget of c£1.9bn (60%). As noted above, the Minister met with the Finance Minister in November 2011 to reinforce how seriously the Resource budget position was constrained and the direct impact it would have on frontline services. The initial DE 2011-15 Savings Delivery Plan required over £300m of savings to be achieved over the budget period.

5.25 Following talks convened with the First and Deputy First Ministers the Minister was successful, in January 2012, in securing an additional £120m directly for school budgets, allocated over the remaining three years of the 2011-15 Budget period (£30m: 2012-13; £15m: 2013-14 and £75m: 2014-15). He has further ensured that the £75m allocation in 2014-15, which originally was time-bounded, has now been permanently added to the Education baseline for 2015-16.

5.26 In identifying the proposed budget reductions the objective has been to avoid reductions in schools budgets as far as possible. However, due to the scale and timing of the required 2015-16 budget reductions and the fact that the

ASB represents c60% of the total Resource budget, this has not been entirely possible.

5.27 Hence it is proposed that the ASB be reduced in 2015-16 by £78.7m or 7%. Clearly this is a very significant reduction to be delivered in one financial year, especially in light of the very challenging financial circumstances a large number of schools already find themselves in.

5.28 This proposed reduction is below the overall 2015-16 Resource Budget funding gap of 8.4% and will be offset, to a limited extent, by the £10m inescapable pressure detailed in Table 5.

6. Assessment of Impacts – Equality and Good Relations

- 6.1 The Department is committed to ensuring that it fulfils its duties under Section 75 (1) and (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in relation to having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and to have regard to desirability of promoting good relations.
- 6.2 Tackling educational inequalities and disadvantage is a core priority for the Department and the budget will continue to be deployed in support of this objective. The promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations is also an important part of ongoing policy development, legislative activities and operational programmes. In managing the proposed Resource Budget reductions, the Department is making every effort to protect front line services whilst cutting out unnecessary administration.
- 6.3 The Department has also sought to ensure that the required reductions to its budget are applied as far as possible in a manner that does not disproportionately or adversely affect one age group, or other s75 category, over another.
- 6.4 The Department has undertaken preliminary, high-level screening of the proposals in line with our equality obligations and they are largely considered to have no or minor impacts (further details are provided below). Where necessary, full Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as budget reduction measures are further developed and implemented.
- 6.5 The Department would welcome any comments on any potential equality implications arising from the proposals and will consider the need for any further mitigating actions in light of responses received during the consultation. Promotion of equality of opportunity and the protection of services to vulnerable groups will be a key consideration in the Department's Final Budget decisions.

Summary of the Equality and Good Relations Implications of DE Capital Spending Proposals for 2015-16

6.6 Preliminary high-level screening of the Capital proposals, in accordance with section 75 (1) and (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, has identified that the overall effect of the Department's proposals should result in no or a minor impact.

Summary of the Equality and Good Relations Implications of DE Resource Spending Proposals for 2015-16

6.7 The Department has carried out preliminary high-level screening of the impact of the proposed Resource Budget reductions on section 75 groups. As noted above, the screening reflects the approach taken to ensure that the reductions are not disproportionately or adversely applied and, accordingly, shows that the overall approach of the Department in developing its budget proposals within the resources made available for education should have a minimal impact in terms of equality of opportunity. This is because, wherever possible, the Department has also taken account of mitigating measures to minimise impact.

6.8 Each individual proposal has also been subject to Equality screening and, where necessary, full Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as they are further developed and implemented.

6.9 In determining strategic priorities the Minister's focus has been on protecting frontline services as far as possible, while promoting equality and raising education standards.

6.10 As noted above, the Department would welcome views on its approach to ensuring that its proposals represent an effective means of minimising the impact of reductions in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations.