

**12 February 2014**

**EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENTS 2014 – 2015**

*Report of the Director of Education and Early Intervention*

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**1. Purpose**

1.1 To seek approval of Forum for:

- Funding early years CLA through budget shares;
- Carrying forward underspend to continue the expansion of the full-time places scheme.

1.2 To inform Forum on plans for the recommissioning of Children's Centres, and to update on the quality and impact of Early Years services.

**2. Recommendations**

The Forum is asked to agree the following which have been recommended through the funding consultation and the Early Years Consultative Executive Group:

- 2.1 To allocate approximately £80,000 through the EYSFF to early education providers who have CLA children attending their setting, according to the formula outlined in section 5.2.
- 2.2 To agree that £250,000 for full time places is centrally retained in 2014/15.
- 2.3 Forum is asked to note the updates on the quality and impact of Hertfordshire's early years services and the planning for redesigning the current children's centre programme.

**3. Early Years Services: quality and impact; and proposals for Children's Centre programme**

3.1 As outlined in the Standards and Quality report to Forum, Hertfordshire children are achieving better than the national average at EYFSP, and the gap is narrowing between the lowest attaining 20% and the rest.

- 3.2 In addition, the quality of early years PVI provision is higher than the national average with 83.6% judged good or outstanding.
- 3.3 Early education is one part of the range of services for young children and their families. Children's Centres, childcare providers, health services (such as health visiting, midwifery, GPs) children's library services, Home-Start, toddler groups, parenting support groups and others all contribute with early education providers and parents/carers to the outcomes for young children as measured by EYFSP and by the outcomes in the NHS Healthy Child (0-5) programme.
- 3.4 Children's centres coordinate and sign post to local provision, working closely with health services, social care teams, Thriving Families teams and Job Centre Plus in order to identify where children or their families are in need of early intervention or more targeted/specialist support.
- 3.5 Statutory guidance outlines the core purpose of children's centres which is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged, so children are equipped for life and ready for school, no matter what their background or family circumstances. The key priorities for children's centres are to improve:
- child development and school readiness;
  - parenting aspirations, self esteem and parenting skills;
  - child and family health and life chances.

The core purpose of children's centres requires them to work both universally and to target resources according to need, investing in the earliest years of a child's life. Universal services in children's centres are significant as they ensure early assessment of needs and targeted services, with access to safeguarding and specialist services for those families who need it.

- 3.6 Children's centres are inspected by Ofsted, and since the new, tougher test framework was introduced in April 2013, 77% of individual centres in Hertfordshire have been judged as good or outstanding. This compares favourably with national results. In addition, healthy weight and breast feeding rates have improved, and children's centres contribute to these child health measures.
- 3.7 The current children's centre lead agencies have contracts which expire in March 2015, and we are in the process of considering how to structure the programme from 2015 – 2018. The process for developing the plans for the future of the Hertfordshire Children's Centre programme is as follows:

**Stage one** – an evaluation of the current service was carried out in 2012, which included a survey of 3268 parents who use children's centres; focus groups with non-users, partner agencies, children's centre staff; online survey with responses from GPs, health visitors, midwives, Job Centre Plus, Home-Start, social workers

**Stage two** –using the findings from the evaluation and recognising the changes in demand children’s centres face, a discussion document launched on 6<sup>th</sup> February invites responses on key questions to help develop proposals

**Stage three** – a statutory public consultation on those proposals which will take place in the summer term 2014

#### **4. Funding CLA in Early Years provision**

- 4.1 A proposal to provide additional funding through budget shares for early years CLA children was endorsed by the responses to the Early Years Funding Consultation and the Early Years Consultative Executive Group.
- 4.2 The proposal is that £1320 per CLA will be allocated. On average 40 – 60 children in a cohort could be eligible for this funding, and so the cost is estimated at between £50,000 and £80,000 per year. This comprises only around 0.1% of total early years funding.
- 4.3 The overall inflation figure budgeted for early years includes a 1% inflation uplift (£94k) on the 2013-14 budget for two year olds. In view of the conclusion at the last Forum meeting that the funding for 2 year olds in 2014-15 should be contained within the specific DSG allocation for 2 year olds, it is intended to use this inflation provision to fund the new CLA factor.
- 4.4 Forum is asked to approve this additional element of the EYSFF.

#### **5. Full time places**

- 5.1 £100K is included within base budget to support full time (FT) places in early education provision for vulnerable children who meet specific criteria:
    - Child looked after;
    - Child is subject to a Special Guardianship Order;
    - Child is staying in a refuge;
    - Child is subject to a Child Protection Plan;
    - The child’s family is open to social car;
    - The child has a CAF or early Support Family Service plan in place;
    - A family in crisis – additional information has to be provided to demonstrate this.
- Schools Forum agreed that a further £150K from DSG carry forward would be included in this budget in 2013/14 in order to expand the scheme across the county.

5.2 We do not expect more than a small part (£23k) of this additional £150k to be spent in 2013/14, for the following reasons:

- Capacity of CSS to deliver the increase in FT places was limited because of the need to focus on delivering the increase in two year free places;
- In addition, the payment process for all 2, 3 and 4 year old places moved from finance into CSS and this took time to embed;
- The current 'double district' support for the scheme is not effective because the lead children's centres have less contact with early education providers from outside their area;
- The requirement to have an early years professional or teacher, whilst recognised as important for improving quality, is proving a barrier to some providers joining the scheme in areas where there are higher levels of vulnerable children;
- The qualification requirement is also not aligned with the requirements for receiving two year old free place funding even though vulnerable two year olds may meet the criteria for a full time place at 3, but they could have to move setting in order to receive this.

5.3 Proposals are being developed by the full time places working group to streamline the process and increase recruitment into full time places, and these will be taken to the Early Years Consultative Executive Group for consideration in March. Forum is, therefore, asked to agree to roll forward the underspend in the budget for full time places from 2013/14 to 2014/15; and to retain centrally a budget of £250,000 for full time places in 2014/15. This would be funded as follows:

Base budget	£100,000
Underspend on full time places budget in 2013-14 (carried forward to 2014-15)	£127,000
Balance funded from general DSG carry forward	£ 23,000
Total:	£250,000

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 Forum is asked to approve the recommendations in section 2 and to note the update in section 4.