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FULL TIME PLACES UPDATE 2014-15

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To share with Forum an evaluation of the Full Time Places scheme for vulnerable three and four year olds and to seek Forum's views regarding the future direction of the scheme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended to Forum that:
- The budget for the FT places scheme is increased by £50,000 to £150,000, with a consequential increase in the total budget held for Central Early Years Services;
 - There is a guideline allocation within this of £50k of the base budget is allocated to short term crisis support for families who meet the family in crisis criteria and £100k for longer term family issues for those children who meet any of the remaining criteria.

3. Full Time Places for Three and Four Year Olds Scheme Evaluation

- 3.1 The Full Time Places scheme supports vulnerable families in Hertfordshire by increasing three and four year olds universal free early education entitlement of 15 hours per week to a maximum of 30 hours a week. The scheme was established to support families in short term crisis that would benefit from their child being in a high quality early education setting and to enable professionals to work with the rest of the family. This help can take many forms including parenting courses and medical treatment.

In some Children Centre communities, the scheme has been widened to support families for longer than one term where there are limited short term solutions.

3.2 Full Time Places are currently offered to families who meet the following 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 care;
- 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.

3.3 In the autumn term the numbers of families supported within each of the criteria were as follows:

Child is looked after	2
Child subject of a special guardianship order	7
Child is staying in a refuge	0
Child subject to a child protection plan	10
Family is open to social care	7
Child has a CAF or early Support Family Service plan in place	10
Family in crisis	25

3.3.1 To enable the scheme to be evaluated, to evidence how children and families have benefitted from the scheme, Children Centres were requested to provide a case study for each child who accessed a full time place during the autumn term. Of the 67 children supported, 30 case studies were submitted and 22 children had accessed a place for more than one term and the remaining 8 children accessed the place for one term. This evaluation is based on the available information, which is attached as Appendix 1. It is not possible to assess in quantitative terms the benefits of the scheme, but the case studies illustrate the types of circumstances in which the offer is made.

3.3.2 Children Centres requested flexibility regarding the criteria by including 'Family in Crisis' which enable Children Centres to be able to submit an application for families who do not meet the other criteria. There is a degree of variation across children's centres in how the scheme is being used. Going forward with the new structure of Children's centre provision, we will be introducing more clear-cut guidance on when we believe it is appropriate to use the scheme.

3.3.3 We will also be requesting that all families are supported, before any intervention, to complete the Family Star tool, for supporting and measuring change. Family Star covers the following areas:

- 1. Physical health;
- 2. Emotional well-being;
- 3. Keeping your children safe;
- 4. Social networks;
- 5. Education and learning;
- 6. Boundaries and behaviour;
- 7. Family routine;
- 8. Home and money

Family Star enables professionals to evidence the difference an intervention is making in a family's life.

3.3.4 As regards future funding and eligibility, we do not believe that there is a need further to extend the funding or coverage of the scheme, unless and until further evidence emerges of its benefits – which may result from the use of the Family Star tool. In many circumstances, families are able to pay for child care using the child care element of working tax credit and in others the existing free entitlement is appropriate and adequate. However, we would wish to continue with the current level of provision.

Financial summary

3.4 Currently the base budget is £100K although Forum agreed to an additional one off amount in Spring 2014 of £150K to enable the scheme to be extended on a trial basis. Each full time place costs approximately £2.7k per annum. So far this financial year 189 children have been supported with the majority of children receive funding for two terms or less, as set out below. It's likely that total spending will be about £150,000.

Term	Number of children	Spend
Summer 2014	78	£58,112
Autumn 2014	61	£47,260
Spring 2015	50 (to date)	£35,352 (to date)
Total	189 (to date)	£140,824 (to date)

4. Conclusion

4.1 It is recommended to Forum that:

- The base budget for the FT places scheme is increased by £50,000 to £150,000;
- There is a guideline allocation within this of £50k of the base budget is allocated to short term crisis support for families who meet the family in crisis criteria and £100k for longer term family issues for those children who meet any of the remaining criteria.