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EARLY EDUCATION UPDATE 2014-15

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Forum of the current position regarding free early education for two year olds.
- 1.2 To inform Forum of the current position regarding the Full Time Places scheme for vulnerable three and four year olds.

2. Free Early Education for Two Year olds - Update

- 2.1 The Free Early Education Scheme for disadvantaged two year olds was expanded to 40% of two year olds across England in September 2014.
- 2.2 In Hertfordshire the number of eligible two year olds as identified by the DfE is 4041.
- 2.3 During the Autumn Term 2014, 2584 eligible two year olds were accessing a place, this amounts to 63% of the identified cohort of children.
- 2.4 A new project steering group has been established and will meet monthly from January 2015 to ensure harder to engage parents fully understand their entitlement.
- 2.5 The priority for the Spring and Summer term will be to increase the take up of eligible children and to ensure that those children who are accessing a place are receiving their full entitlement. Children Centres are crucial in this work.
- 2.6 The steering group will also investigate the possibility of increasing the number of maintained schools offering free early education for two year old places in line with the requirement to have a separate Ofsted Early Years registration from September 2015.

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 to enable professionals to work with the rest of the family. This help can take many forms including parenting courses and medical treatment.

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

To enable the scheme to be evaluated, to evidence how children and families have benefitted from the scheme, Children Centres have been requested to provide a case study for each child who accessed a full time place during the Autumn term. Forum will receive the evaluation in February.

3.4 The future of the scheme has been discussed at length at the Full Time Places project board and there are two strong held opinions regarding how the scheme should develop. The two options are that the scheme remains targeted on vulnerable families in short term crisis who receive funding normally for one school term as well as children known to social care. The other option is that the scheme is widened to include families who have a longer term need, for example those children who may have accessed a free early education for two year old place under the 20% most financially disadvantaged criteria.

- 3.5 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 rolled out across Hertfordshire. Each full time place costs approximately £2.7k per annum. So far this financial year 189 children have been supported as the vast majority of children receive funding for a term or less. If the scheme were to be developed into supporting children long term, a maximum of 34 children per financial year would be supported if the base budget remains at £100k:

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 No bid has currently been made for continuation of the existing £150,000 of top-up funding, which has been agreed by Forum on a one-off basis and is not in the base budget.
- 4.2 Our intention is to report back again to Forum in February, with more detailed evaluation of the scheme, and options which limit expenditure to £100k; which provide only a crisis intervention service; and which provide a wider service. These can be considered in the light of then-available DSG funding, estimates of which will have been updated in the light of the January census.