

*27 February 2019*

**SUPPORTING TRANSITION FROM EARLY YEARS PROVIDERS INTO NURSERY  
AND RECEPTION CLASSES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

*Report of the Director of Children's Services*

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**1. Purpose**

To seek approval from Schools Forum on proposals for additional work with primary schools and early years providers to support transition from PVI's to school provision.

**2. Recommendations:**

Schools Forum is recommended:

- (i) To note that a £1566k underspending is anticipated on Early Years expenditure in 2018/19
- (ii) To agree in principle to set aside funding of £960k, on a one-off basis, to commission from HfL a programme of action as described in this report, to improve transition between nursery and reception provision and thereby improve attainment at EYFS.
- (iii) To agree to establish a working group of Primary and Early Years representatives to agree the details of the programme
- (iv) To agree formally to centrally-retain £360k of this funding for 2019/20 for the first two terms of activity
- (v) To note that the release of a further tranche of funding for 2020/21 would be the matter of a progress report to Forum in November 2019.

**3. Summary**

Earlier on this agenda is the annual report on standards and quality in Hertfordshire schools. Members of Forum will be familiar with the pattern of performance it shows, but in summary:

- Attainment of pupils measured at the EYFS starts out slightly above the national average but somewhat below statistical neighbours
- Moving into KS1 and KS2 attainment starts to exceed both national averages and statistical neighbours, as children have spent progressively longer periods of time in the Hertfordshire education system
- At the end of KS4 and at KS5 attainment is well above national averages and statistical neighbours.

Across the phases, however, the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils is less satisfactory.

In order to further increase overall attainment, and in particular that of disadvantage pupils, action is needed across all phases. But this paper makes specific proposals directed to the area where perhaps there is the greatest scope to improve relative to how other authorities perform. Success in Early Years of course then is clearly evidenced as beneficial through each further phase of education.

Currently we have some clear evidence on what approaches would be likely to succeed in early years – described in the paper below. It is also the case that Hertfordshire's institutions – schools and PVI providers – perform well as measured by Ofsted. The opportunity we believe lies substantially in improving the transition between providers/phases.

This requires centrally co-ordinated and funded activity. Currently, we spend appreciably less than DfE allows on centrally-provided services. Our spend against the central expenditure limit of 5% is only 3.6%. There is therefore a good case on arrangement of grounds for funding a programme with the specific intention of improving EYFS outcomes through improve transition and support.

The proposed programme is described below, and Forum is asked to support and fund this. Forum is also asked to agree that a schools and PVI providers group is set up to inform and oversee the development and delivery of the programme.

## **4. Background**

### **The challenge**

In 2018, 72.7% of children in Hertfordshire reach a 'good level of development' (at expected or exceeding level in prime, literacy and mathematics) in Early Years. This was an improvement of 0.5 percentage points (ppts) from 2017 and placed Hertfordshire in the second quintile when ranked against all other local authorities. This is slightly below our statistical neighbours (0.2ppts).

The inequality gap for Early Years which is defined as 'the difference between the mean EYFS score of the lowest attaining 20% of children and the median score of all children (expressed as a % of the median score) is in line with the national score (31.9 for Hertfordshire, 31.8 for national in 2018) but is wider than statistical

neighbours (28.2). Closing the gap for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups between that achievement and that of all children remains a priority for Hertfordshire.

The gap is widest for children with SEND who may have characteristics that prevent them reaching the expected levels of attainment in Early Learning Goals that are required to attain a 'good level of development'. It is also wider than national for children with English as an additional language and for those that are from financially disadvantaged families. 70% of children in the lowest attaining 20% **do not** have a special educational need, 24% have English as an additional language and 17% would be eligible for free school meals. At the end of EYFS Hertfordshire has a higher proportion of children (4.4%) than national (2.6%) achieving the maximum EYFSP score, but also a higher proportion achieving the minimum score (4.5% compared to 3.5%).

The 20% inequalities gap is not narrowing quickly enough. 68% of FSM eligible children attain at least expected levels in communication and language compared to 85% of non FSM eligible peers. It is nationally recognised that there is now an increase in adverse childhood experiences affecting communication skills and behaviour.

One reason that the gap is not narrowing quickly enough is because children at risk of falling behind are not identified quickly enough at the point of transition into their maintained early education place in their Primary School nursery class. Therefore, it is vital practitioners receive *accurate information at the point of transition* to empower them with the knowledge, skills and where relevant support to help children get off to a good start in the timeliest way.

To narrow the 20% inequalities gap, we need to reduce the number of children being assessed as 1 across all EYFSP Early Learning Goals at the end of their Reception year, some of whom may have SEN/D but many may have other needs such as, behaviour, speech, language or communication issues as indicated in table 1 below.

**Table 1**

|                                      | Number of pupils across Herts | Mean EYFS score of group | 20% Gap |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| Lowest 20%                           | 2,870                         | 23.19407666              | 31.78%  |
| Lowest 20% also on FSM               | 486                           | 22.74691358              | 33.10%  |
| Lowest 20% not FSM                   | 2,384                         | 23.27978188              | 31.53%  |
| Lowest 20% also with SEND            | 860                           | 20.6744186               | 39.19%  |
| Lowest 20% without SEND              | 2,010                         | 24.26567164              | 28.63%  |
| Lowest 20% also on FSM and with SEND | 172                           | 20.89534884              | 38.54%  |
| Lowest 20% also with EAL             | 691                           | 22.90303907              | 32.64%  |
| Lowest 20% not EAL                   | 2,179                         | 23.28040385              | 31.53%  |

## The proposal

Currently, information sharing between early year's sectors is variable and schools are at risk of receiving children with limited information to swiftly enough meet the needs of those with a range of complex personal, social and emotional needs. Where Herts for Learning Early Years team worked in 6 target areas over the last two years the inequality gap has closed in 5 of these. This level of funded programme of support has not previously been available for schools.

Hertfordshire County Council's Family Services Commissioning Team has worked with Herts for Learning to develop two options to help improve attainment and reduce the inequalities gap, based in part on earlier successful experience. The two options include the same basic work proposal but the second option has additional activity and is therefore more expensive.

It is proposed that this work would begin in March/April 2019 and would cover the academic years 2019-20 and 20/21, up to Christmas 2021. It is proposed that the work would be reviewed in Autumn 2021 with a view to consider the sustainability of the work for subsequent years.

- Option 1
  - (This includes development of transition resources, development of schools readiness risk stratification that informs prioritisation for individual nursery class visits and support and workforce development).
  - Total cost £258, 548 annually
- Option 2 (Optional 1 plus additional activity).
  - Total cost £482,510 annually in year 1 dropping to £360k subsequently

Please see **Annex A** showing Options 1 & 2 for more detail including cost.

The additional activity as set out in Option 2 would further strengthen the long-term strategy around transition.

It would enable Herts for Learning to get into **all** nursery classes in maintained schools to offer support, provide additional training for teachers to help them with parents and carers and provide a secure electronic system for sharing transition documents. Option 2 would also enable Herts for Learning to work with PVI's and schools to ensure that the information received by schools each Autumn was informing support for schools with high levels of children with emotional and behavioural challenges.

This work would take into account children at risk of falling behind due to behaviour and SEND issues that provide barriers to attaining expected levels of development. This support for SEND will focus on the need to ensure that transition information is accurate and any SEND concern is flagged up by the data sent to schools so that HCC can be alert to assigning specialist teachers or generic support.

For these reasons, Officers have therefore concluded that the preference would be for Option 2

Both options have been designed on a solution which is based on the findings of the HfL transition project commissioned by HCC in 2016 (please see Annex B for the Executive Summary of this project) and also the Unicef (2012) 'School Readiness: A conceptual framework' document which describes in detail the three dimensions needed:

- Ready children focusing on children's learning and development
- Ready schools focusing on the practices of schools which foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school
- Ready families focusing on parental and carer attitude and involvement in their children's early learning and development.

The work proposal is also in line with Ambitions 1 and 2 of the Department for Education's social mobility plan 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential' [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/667690/Social\\_Mobility\\_Action\\_Plan\\_-\\_for\\_printing.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan_-_for_printing.pdf) to close the word gap in early years and to close the attainment gap in school while raising the attainment for all. Furthermore, the work proposal is in step with the questions posed in the Early Intervention Foundation document, *Realising the Potential of Early Intervention* released October 2018 <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/realising-the-potential-of-early-intervention>

**The work proposal has three key features:**

1. A universally understood set of tools to support prompt identification of children at risk of falling behind at the point of transition into their maintained nursery or reception class known to the Local Authority
2. A mechanism for school readiness risk stratification to inform support for schools with high levels of children at risk of falling behind
3. Workforce development opportunities

**Summary of the proposed work**

To better equip teachers in Primary schools to receive children into their nursery or reception class, transition mechanisms need to improve so that children at risk of falling behind expected levels receive prompt support from the start to maximise their achievement.

In order to do this, there should be a clear process of information sharing and means by which schools and Hertfordshire County Council can identify children at risk of not attaining expected levels across EYFSP. This needs clear criteria to support shared understanding and facilitation of information between professionals in the PVI and schools sector.

Relevant workforce development will be essential to set high expectations for children with low starting points, with learning that supports understanding of effective intervention approaches.

The proposition includes:

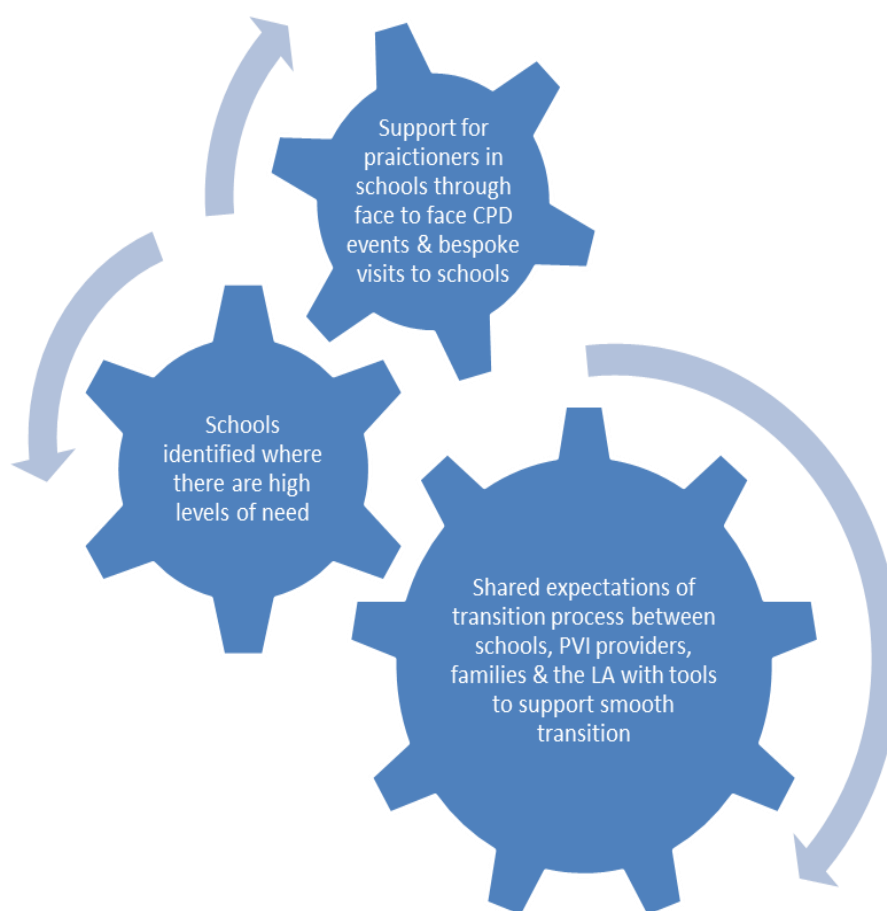
- development & production of a suite of transition guidance materials

- development of materials for schools to share with parents to support their understanding of how to support their child's development
- development of criteria for use by PVI and schools to identify where children are on a 'transition level of need pathway'
- process and mechanism for PVI to securely send sensitive transition information to schools
- training to ensure that PVI providers and schools understand the 'transition level of need pathway' and information sharing protocols
- a checklist that is shared with HCC to identify the level of cohort need
- deployment of advisers to support teachers in schools with high levels of cohort need to develop effective practice to meet the needs of children at risk of falling behind
- co-ordination of transition events to facilitate professional dialogue with relevant personnel regarding individual children's level of attainment prior to transition and identified level of need
- organisation and facilitation of 'transition hubs' where teachers can access expertise to support their intervention practice, behaviour for learning and teaching strategies
- access to training on areas identified most pertinent to the needs for their cohort

**The outcomes of this work will be:**

- To develop a universally shared and understood approach to transition that enables nursery class practitioners to identify individual children's level of need so that they can adapt provision to accelerate progress from the earliest opportunity.
- To identify schools in high-risk categories and provide them with support to equip practitioners with skills to best support children with the highest level of need.
- To accelerate progress rates for those with low starting points to raise the average point score and proportion of children reaching expected levels of development across all early learning goals.
- To narrow the inequalities gap by increasing the mean average point score for the lowest attaining 20%.

## Working together to support smooth transitions



### 5 Profile of activity and evaluation of success

The recommended programme of activity described above would take place broadly to timeline set out below, by term.

This timeline is proposed in order to allow time for the impact of the programme to be felt and for a formal evaluation of its impact to be undertaken based on EYFS outcomes. We wish to avoid the undesirable consequences of starting initiatives and then ending them prior to the point at which quantitative evidence can be obtained of their effectiveness.

#### Proposed expenditure by term:

| £'000s  | Summer | Autumn | Spring | Total |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 2019/20 | 40     | 160    | 160    | 360   |
| 2020/21 | 120    | 120    | 120    | 360   |
| 2021/22 | 120    | 120    | t/b/c  | 240   |

This would mean that children entering Reception in Autumn 2020 and Autumn 2021 would have benefitted. At the end of Autumn Term 2021 an evaluation would be made on the basis of summer 2021 EYFS outcomes as to whether the

programme had been successful, and to what degree it was important to continue or to reshape it.

## **6. Financial implications**

The budget monitor elsewhere on this agenda identifies significant underspending in the Early Years block of the DSG. This totals £1,566k, made up of £966k on delegated budget items and £600k on centrally-retained items. The report elsewhere on this agenda on the early Years budget also refers to this.

The proposal to Forum is to set aside funding of £960k, on a one-off basis, to cover the roll out of the programme to the end of Autumn Term in 2021. This would be drawn from resources carried-forward into 2019/20, which include underspends as referred to above. For the year 2019/20, the additional of £360k to the total of centrally-retained expenditure would raise the percentage of retention from 3.6% of total budget to 4.2%. Against the required ceiling of 5% this remains reasonable.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Forum is asked to agree the recommendations as set out in section 2 of this paper.



## Annex A: Options for the Transition Work Year 1

### Option 1

| HfL role and responsibility   | Cost<br><br>Total cost £258,548 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <p><b>Transition Resources</b></p> <p>Write RAG criterion for a clear ‘transition level of need pathway’ to ensure that practitioners are clear of the process to follow when children are at risk of falling into the lowest attaining 20% at age five years old.</p> <p>Develop and produce a transition toolkit for each school that includes guidance regarding expectations for information sharing between PVI and schools across the county.</p> <p>Develop &amp; produce ‘ready for school’ resources for schools to use to engage children, parents and carers in their first visit to school.</p> <p>Update the existing paper Transition document to an electronic format that allows online completion that enables practitioners to share children’s level of need with schools.</p> <p>Develop an Annual transition planner to help practitioners and Head teachers plan key events across the year.</p> <p>Develop a Transition audit for school use to evaluate internal transition practice.</p> <p>Write and produce an Induction Workshop suite of materials that schools can use at their first induction meeting with new parents.</p> <p>Write and produce a Parent Information Pack that the school can personalise that supports parent understanding of how to support school readiness from the moment they accept a place.</p> | £91,150                         |
| <p><b>Impact &amp; Needs Assessment</b></p> <p>Develop schools readiness risk stratification that informs prioritisation for individual nursery class visits from HfLSEND, well-being or EYA and alerts HCC colleagues of further specialist need.</p> <p>Analysis of schools readiness risk stratification and co-ordination of up to 60 visits to schools in the highest risk categories.</p>   | £66,620                         |

| HfL role and responsibility   | Cost                       |
|---|----------------------------|
|   | <b>Total cost £258,548</b> |
| <p>Co-ordinate and run 'transition hubs' where discussion is facilitated around local school cohort issues, that provides schools with direct access to specialists around SLCN, SEND and EAL involving Early Start teams to ensure understanding of community need.</p> <p><b>Workforce development</b></p> <p>Half day cross sector training events that equip PVI and schools practitioners to use the transition toolkit &amp; understand the level of need criterion.</p> <p>Organise and facilitate transition information sharing sessions between PVI providers and nursery classes that focuses on identifying children's level of need in particular those at risk of falling behind.</p> <p>Deliver 15 twilight 'Are you ready?' sessions to enable teachers to access sessions pertinent to the needs of their cohort, ranging from supporting children's speech, language and communication skills, personal social and emotional skills, and effective behaviour for learning strategies.</p> | £100,778                   |

## Option 2: (Option 1 with additional activity) Year 1

| HfL role and responsibility   | <p>Cost (includes Option 1 base costs plus the costs for additional Option 2 work)<br/><i>(Additional activity highlighted)</i></p> <p><b>Total cost   £482,510</b></p> |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Transition Resources</b></p> <p>Write RAG criterion for a clear ‘transition level of need pathway’ to ensure that practitioners are clear of the process to follow when children are at risk of falling into the lowest attaining 20% at age five years old.</p> <p>Develop and produce a transition toolkit for each school that includes guidance regarding expectations for information sharing between PVI and schools across the county.</p> <p>Develop &amp; produce ‘ready for school’ resources for schools to use to engage children, parents and carers in their first visit to school.</p> <p>Update the existing paper transition document to an electronic format that allows online completion that enables practitioners to share children’s level of need with schools.</p> <p>Develop an Annual transition planner to help practitioners and Head teachers plan key events across the year</p> <p>Develop a transition audit for school use to evaluate internal transition practice.</p> <p>Write and produce an Induction workshop suite of materials that schools can use at their first induction meeting with new parents.</p> <p>Write and produce a Parent Information Pack that the school can personalise that supports parents’ understanding of how to support school readiness from the moment they accept a place.</p> <p>Develop a secure electronic system for sharing transition document.</p> <p>Home school activity pack devised to support development in the Prime areas of learning - develop a parent pack that</p> | <p>£151,025</p>   |

| <b>HfL role and responsibility</b>   | <b>Cost (includes Option 1 base costs plus the costs for additional Option 2 work) (Additional activity highlighted)</b><br><br><b>Total cost   £482,510</b> |
|--|--|
| includes ideas and activity suggestions about how they can support their child.  |  |
| <p><b>Impact &amp; Needs Assessment</b></p> <p>Develop schools readiness risk stratification that informs prioritisation for individual nursery class visits from HfL SEND or EYA and alerts HCC colleagues of further specialist need.</p> <p>Analysis of schools readiness risk stratification and co-ordination of up to 60 visits to schools in the highest risk categories.</p> <p>Co-ordinate and run ‘transition hubs’ where discussion is facilitated around local school cohort issues that provides schools with direct access to specialists around SLCN, SEND and EAL involving Early Start teams to ensure an understanding of community need.</p> <p>Design electronic transition checklist that is submitted to HCC, shared with HfL for monitoring and to inform identification of schools with highest level of need to inform further levels of support.</p> <p>Half day visit to every maintained nursery class between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 &amp; 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.</p> | £215,370   |
| <p><b>Workforce development</b></p> <p>Half day cross sector training events that equip PVI and schools practitioners to use the transition toolkit &amp; understand the level of need criteria.</p> <p>Organise and facilitate transition information sharing sessions between PVI providers and nursery classes that focus on identifying children’s level of need in particular those at risk of falling behind.</p>  | £116,115   |

| HfL role and responsibility  | <p><b>Cost (includes Option 1 base costs plus the costs for additional Option 2 work)</b><br/> <b><i>(Additional activity highlighted)</i></b></p> <p><b>Total cost   £482,510</b></p> |
|--|--|
| <p>Deliver 15 twilight ‘Are you ready?’ sessions to enable teachers to access sessions pertinent to the needs of their cohort, ranging from supporting children’s speech, language and communication skills, personal social and emotional skills, and effective behaviour for learning strategies</p> <p>Provide train-the-trainer workshops for nursery class teachers in each district to equip them to lead parent/carers induction meeting that focuses on how they can support their child make a smooth transition into school.</p> |  |

## Annexe A2: Options for the Transition Work Year 2

### Option 1

| HfL role and responsibility   | Cost   |
|---|--|
|   | <b>Total cost £183,654</b>   |
| <p><b>Transition Resources</b></p> <p>Annual review of RAG criterion to ensure fit for purpose 'transition level of need pathway' and electronic updates to schools and settings where required.</p> <p>Annual review of transition document, toolkit &amp; annual plan to ensure these meets statutory requirements in line with national agenda items.</p> <p>Annual review and update of Induction Workshop suite of materials that schools can use at their first induction meeting with new parents.</p> <p>Annual review and production of Parent Information Pack that the school can personalise that supports parent understanding of how to support school readiness from the moment they accept a place.</p> | £38,375  |
| <p><b>Impact &amp; Needs Assessment</b></p> <p>Annual review and update of schools readiness risk stratification that informs prioritisation for individual nursery class visits from HfL SEND, well-being or EYA and alerts HCC colleagues of further specialist need.</p> <p>Annual analysis of schools readiness risk stratification and co-ordination of up to 60 visits to schools in the highest risk categories.</p> <p>Co-ordinate and run 'transition hubs' where discussion is facilitated around local school cohort issues, that provides schools with direct access to specialists around SLCN, SEND and EAL involving Early Start teams to ensure understanding of community need.</p>                    | <p><i>Year 2 - Ongoing use of Year 1 materials</i></p> <p><i>Year 2 activity cost £67,245</i></p>                                      |
| <p><b>Workforce development</b></p> <p>Half day cross sector training events that equip PVI and schools practitioners to use the transition toolkit &amp; understand the level of need criterion.</p>   | <p><i>Year 2 - Ongoing use of Year 1 materials</i></p> <p><i>Year 2 training and information sharing sessions continue £78,034</i></p> |

| HfL role and responsibility   | Cost                              |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <p>Organise and facilitate transition information sharing sessions between PVI providers and nursery classes that focuses on identifying children's level of need in particular those at risk of falling behind.</p> <p>Deliver 15 twilight 'Are you ready?' sessions to enable teachers to access sessions pertinent to the needs of their cohort, ranging from supporting children's speech, language and communication skills, personal social and emotional skills, and effective <b>behaviour for learning strategies</b>.</p> | <p><b>Total cost £183,654</b></p> |

## Option 2: (Option 1 with additional activity) Year 2

| <b>HfL role and responsibility</b>  | <b>Cost (includes Option 1 base costs plus the costs for additional Option 2 work)</b><br><br><b>(Additional activity highlighted)</b><br><br><b>Year 2 £424,304</b> |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Transition Resources</b></p> <p>Annual review of RAG criterion to ensure fit for purpose 'transition level of need pathway' and electronic updates to schools and settings where required.</p> <p>Annual review of transition document, toolkit &amp; annual plan to ensure these meets statutory requirements in line with national agenda items.</p> <p>Annual review and update of Induction Workshop suite of materials that schools can use at their first induction meeting with new parents.</p> <p>Annual review and production of Parent Information Pack that the school can personalise that supports parent understanding of how to support school readiness from the moment they accept a place.</p> <p>Review and re-produce 'ready for school' resources for schools to use to engage children, parents and carers in their first visit to school.</p> <p>Review and evaluate return of transition audits from schools to evaluate internal transition practice.</p> <p>Review, update and produce Home school activity packs devised to support development in the Prime areas of learning - develop a parent pack that includes ideas and activity suggestions about how they can support their child.</p> | <p>£116,500</p>  |
| <p><b>Impact &amp; Needs Assessment</b></p> <p>Annual review and update of schools readiness risk stratification that informs prioritisation for individual nursery class visits from HfL SEND, well-being or EYA and alerts HCC colleagues of further specialist need.</p>   | <p><i>Year 2 - Ongoing use of Year 1 materials</i></p> <p><i>Year 2 activity cost £217,245</i></p>   |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Annual analysis of schools readiness risk stratification and co-ordination of up to 60 visits to schools in the highest risk categories.</p> <p>Co-ordinate and run 'transition hubs' where discussion is facilitated around local school cohort issues that provides schools with direct access to specialists around SLCN, SEND and EAL involving Early Start teams to ensure an understanding of community need.</p> <p>Bi-Annual review and analysis of electronic transition checklist that is submitted to HCC, shared with HfL for monitoring and to inform identification of schools with highest level of need to inform further levels of support.</p> <p>Half day visit to maintained nursery classes prioritised according to need</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Workforce development</b></p> <p>Half day cross sector training events that continue to equip PVI and schools practitioners to use the transition toolkit &amp; understand the level of need criteria.</p> <p>Organise and facilitate transition information sharing sessions between PVI providers and nursery classes that focus on identifying children's level of need in particular those at risk of falling behind.</p> <p>Deliver 15 twilight 'Are you ready?' sessions to enable teachers to access sessions pertinent to the needs of their cohort, ranging from supporting children's speech, language and communication skills, personal social and emotional skills, and effective behaviour for learning strategies</p> <p>Provide train-the-trainer workshops for nursery class teachers in each district to equip them to lead parent/carer induction meeting that focuses on how they can support their child make a smooth transition into school.</p> | <p><i>Year 2 - Ongoing use of Year 1 materials</i></p> <p><i>Year 2 training and information sharing sessions continue £90,559</i></p> |

## **Starting School Transition Project**

### **Executive Summary**

The main focus of the project was to review the transition experience for children from an early years setting to starting school and how schools and settings could work together collaboratively to ensure this is effective for all children. This takes into account that an early years setting could be a day nursery, preschool, childminder, nursery school or nursery class. Starting school primarily focussed on the transition to start full time school in the reception class, but also included transitions into a nursery classes.

Throughout the project it was identified that effective transitions for children needed all those involved to be working together. This includes the practitioners in schools and the early year's settings, alongside the involvement of parents whilst ensuring the voice of the child is listened to. These themes are highlighted in the current research on transition practice including contributions from Ofsted and respected early year's researchers including O'Connor, Linden, and Brooker.

At the start of the project schools and settings were asked to rate their current transition practice, allocating a score from poor to excellent. Of those schools completing the survey 73% rated their current transition practice as very good to excellent. Of those early years settings completing the survey 62% rated their current transition practice as very good to excellent.

Within the survey practitioners highlighted the need for increased information sharing and partnership working between schools and early years settings to improve transition. Ensuring a consistent process for sharing accurate data and information about children's learning and development was identified as an area for development.

To further investigate, a pilot transition project was developed in the Hemel West children's centre area, inviting all schools and early years' settings to take part in the project. The project was led by Herts for Learning district early years advisers, who facilitated additional termly meetings over and above their existing networks which had a particular focus on transition processes. This provided training and guidance on high quality transition practice. Within the project the focus group of practitioners shared good practice, identified barriers to effective transitions and developed tools to support effective transition processes. The focus group attended an information sharing session in the summer term in the style of 'speed dating'. This was to share assessment information about the children transitioning between the settings and schools. The pilot project enabled schools and settings to begin to build relationships and encouraged cooperative working to support transition. The effectiveness of the project is summarised here; 'Partnership working with professionals and other providers is good. Information about children's care and learning is shared well. This helps to promote continuity

between the different settings they attend and builds on their prior learning.’ Gadebridge  
Preschool Ofsted Inspection Report, September 2016.

Communication with the early years’ sector on the subject of transition was promoted via the use of the Early Education and Childcare weekly e-news. This included sharing key messages from research, ideas for good practice and requesting feedback.

Feedback was gathered from the early years’ sector through a range of large focus groups, using practitioners attending termly early years briefing sessions. Delegates attending the spring early years conferences took part in activities to gather their feedback on transition practice.

The transition toolkit and a range of tools were developed by the pilot project group in response to the key areas identified. For example, information leaflets for parents and resources to support children as they become familiar with the school environment.

In response to the need for a consistent way to share information regarding a child’s learning and development the transition record form was developed. This was shared with all early years’ settings and requested it was used for the summer 2016 transitions. Schools that had completed the initial survey in March 2016 were asked to review the form and to comment on those they received for summer 2016 transitions of children starting school.

At the start of the autumn term, feedback was gathered from schools and early years’ settings who had used the transition record form. Of those who had rated the usefulness of the form (101 schools and settings) 67% stated that the form was very good to excellent; 71% stated they would use the form again.

In conclusion, through the surveys and focus groups, there is an appetite from early years’ settings and schools for a consistent way to share information around children’s learning and development.

Recommendations from the project include developing collaborative working opportunities between schools and settings, through training, moderating and sharing information together towards building relationships and respect for each other. This could be achieved through facilitated opportunities for schools and settings to meet and work together with a common focus, for example transition.

A minimum expectation for all schools and settings in Hertfordshire to complete the transition record to support information sharing; to embed the use of the record and make it a requirement of all Hertfordshire’s early years processes.

Other key areas to be promoted include the visits between settings and schools, these are vital to support children’s transitions, alongside the programme of settling in visits for the child. Parents want to be more involved and request information on how to support their child.

Case studies were provided by several schools and settings highlighting the good practice currently happening including the involvement of children’s centres.

To embed effective transition processes in Hertfordshire it is recommended that the transition toolkit is made accessible to all sectors, the transition record is the required tool to be

completed and pass information between settings, opportunities are provided for schools and early years settings to work together and transition is recognised as a continuous process and needs the involvement of children, parents and practitioners.

Future considerations to further support effective transitions include a review of the summer holiday impact and potential learning loss for some children; and developing a Hertfordshire agreed strategy for school readiness.

Caroline Chalke  
Early Years Adviser  
Herts for Learning  
November 2016