

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

21 JUNE 2012

SUBJECT:	CHILDCARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CHARGING POLICY
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR TONY SMITH
KEY DECISION?	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 An extensive workforce development training programme has been available on a termly basis to early years and childcare staff working in the private, voluntary and independent sectors since 1999/ 2000. This has ensured access to continuing professional development for the workforce with the intended impact on raising quality for children and young people.
- 1.2 Course participants have been paying a flat fee of £6 per course for the majority of training, with no charge currently being made for courses delivered internally by SureStart Support team staff.
- 1.4 Training is funded by an allocation made through the Early Intervention Grant.
- 1.5 By offering such training, the Local Authority is addressing a statutory duty to ensure access to high quality early education and care as detailed in the Childcare Act 2006.
- 1.6 This report proposes to increase course fees and establish a regular review of charges for future training courses.
- 1.7 If these proposals are accepted, then income from course fees would increase. This could then be re-invested in workforce development and reduce the amount required through the Early Intervention Grant to maintain this programme.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Courses offered through the termly workforce development programme continue to have a high demand and evaluation demonstrates that they are well received by participants. Feedback from managers of settings and their staff would indicate that the training on offer is highly valued.

- 2.2 The training programme is planned to reflect key aspects of professional knowledge and skills at both a national and local level. In developing the programme, OFSTED reports are analysed to identify trends, action plans from the Quality Improvement Support Programme for early education providers are taken into account and national developments incorporated to ensure that the workforce is upskilled in order to offer a quality service to children and young people.
- 2.3 Wirral's approach to training and development is generous when compared to other Local Authorities and courses have been heavily subsidised over the years. Increasing the costs of workforce training courses from £6 - £10 is unlikely to deter settings from participating in continuing professional development.
- 2.4 Increases in course fees may encourage settings to prioritise more effectively the staff who attend training.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 There may be lower attendance on courses. However, research has shown that this has not been the case with local authorities who have had free courses and subsequently implemented a charging policy.
- 3.2 These changes may be a barrier to smaller settings with reduced budgets. However, settings may prioritise more effectively the staff to attend training.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 No change to any aspect of the current charges for workforce training.
- 4.2 Charge in full for the actual costs of training courses. This could seriously compromise participation in training particularly amongst smaller private and voluntary managed settings.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 No plans currently in place to consult more widely with providers.
- 5.2 Paper on this issue has been distributed to and considered by the Children First Strategic Board.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 6.1 Of the total number of settings able to access the workforce training programme, approximately 13% are in the voluntary, community and faith sector.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 7.1 Increase in charges would not have an impact on the administration of the workforce programme as systems are already in place to facilitate this.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None identified.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review will be published on the web site, hyperlink below.

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/children-young-people>

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None identified.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Not applicable.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

12.1 All courses offered through the termly workforce training programme to increase to £10.00 to include courses that are currently free of charge; this is in line with neighbouring Local Authorities.

12.2 Course fees to be reviewed on an annual basis.

12.3 Changes to course fees to be implemented as soon as possible after 1st April 2012.

13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 In comparison with other Local Authorities, the current level of subsidy available to early years and childcare staff through Wirral's SureStart workforce development training could be considered as high. Anecdotally, providers have recognised that the level of subsidy for training is currently very generous.

13.2 In a survey across 10 neighbouring North West Local Authorities, the average cost for three key courses is as follows:-

Course title	North West – average cost per person	Wirral actual cost per person
First Aid	£31	£54
Food Safety	£22	£37
Safeguarding	£8	£24

- 13.3 An increase in course fees could lead to a reduction in the number of participants failing to turn up for training, thereby taking a place which could have been re-allocated. Many courses, particularly First Aid, Food Safety and Safeguarding are heavily over-subscribed and generate waiting lists on a regular basis.
- 13.4 Improving the income generated through an increase in course fees would lead to an increase from 8.9% of the termly workforce development programme budget to 29%. Re-investing the income could alleviate some pressure on the Early Intervention Grant allocation to this area of workforce development.

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REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
No history to date	