

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**Wirral Schools Forum – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**Two Year olds Briefing & Early Years Working Group**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

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### **National Context**

Free early education for disadvantaged two year olds was first piloted in 2006. The offer aims to improve disadvantaged children's social and cognitive outcomes so that by the age of five they are as ready as their more advantaged peers to start and fully benefit from school. The programme aims to provide good quality early education combined with support for parents, for example, to improve their confidence in supporting their children's learning and to deal with other challenges in their lives, such as health problems and family difficulties. The programme has grown substantially over the last few years and now covers around 40% of the country's two year olds (this varies from region to region).

Children are eligible if they live in a family claiming:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income not over £16,190
- Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Working Tax Credits and earn £16,190 a year or less

From September 2014, Children are also entitled to a place if:

- they're looked after by a local council
- they have a current statement of special education needs (SEN) or an education health and care plan
- they get Disability Living Allowance
- they've left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order

### **Local Update**

There are an estimated 3720 two year old children living in Wirral and we are informed by the Department of Work and Pensions that the number of two year olds eligible for free Early Education in Wirral is approximately 1846 under September 2014 criteria (shown above). This is 50% of all Wirral's two year olds.

Although we estimate that there will be 1800 places available at early years settings for eligible two-year-olds on 1 September 2014, these are spread across the Borough and may not meet everyone's needs. There is continued work taking place to raise awareness with targeted families and work continues with schools and private and voluntary providers to develop more places for our most vulnerable children over the next year.

We estimate that approximately 1481 children will be allocated places during the autumn term 2014 and approximately 1600 during the spring term 2015 in total. This means that available places for two year olds will become more difficult to find as traditionally, many available places are not in the geographical areas

that need them most. Central government and the Local Authority are encouraging schools with existing 3 & 4 year old provision to consider whether they have the capacity to expand their provision to take 2 year olds.

Funding was allocated to 1130 two year olds for the summer term 2014 and 1074 two year olds accessed the funding (summer term 2014), giving a drop off rate of 4.96%. This is a considerable improvement compared with the similar period a year ago when the drop off rate was 21%. This is largely due to the introduction of brokerage through Children's Centres for families of eligible two year olds, supporting families to find childcare that suits them.

There will be 137 early years' settings providing places for eligible two-year-olds on 1st September 2014 and 86% of places are in settings judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted, including 12 home based child minders. The remainder of places are provided by either newly registered settings (Ofsted registration assumes a good judgement) or setting judged as "requiring improvement" by Ofsted but working with the Local Authority quality assurance process and in areas of particular sufficiency need.

An on-line application process was introduced in September 2013 which has had a positive impact on the number of applications (parents can now apply themselves rather than having to go through a professional). Support with applications is available through libraries, health settings, Children's Centres and One Stop Shops and a follow up service is provided through the Children's Centres. This service is part of the wider Early Years Review which has taken place during the summer which will be consulted on during October and November. Copies of the full review have been circulated to all primary and nursery schools and colleagues are encouraged to consider their responses as part of the consultation in the near future.

A renewed awareness raising and information campaign is underway with leaflets, posters and a three month local radio campaign taking place in the first half of 2014 and work with professional colleagues continuing to raise the profile of this funding.

In January 2015, payment for 2 year old funding will be based on participation; Local Authority's currently receive an indicative allocation based on 40% of our resident two year olds, rather than our actual number of almost 50%.

In January 2015 payment to local authorities for 2 Year old Funding will be based on participation, those children attending a Early Years place on the census day in January .It is possible that the census return in January may not show a full take up of places, which would mean that funding might not be provided to Wirral for some 2 year olds. Like a number of authorities provision for 2 year olds is continuing to grow and will take time to secure a full take up. Nationally arrangements have been put in place for a second census count in October which would adjust funding and reflect any growth.

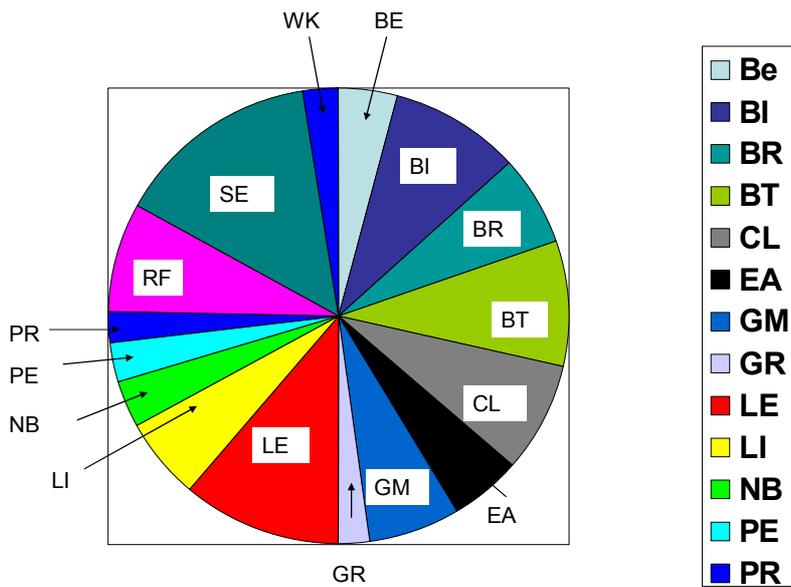
The Early Years Working Group monitors the activity and progress made with two year old funding and consists of:

Richard Longster – Wirral Schools Forum Chair  
Simon Davies – Poulton Penguins Day Nursery  
Denise Macdonald – Kingfisher Day Nursery  
Colin Chow – Wirral Council  
Kath Lloyd – Wirral Council  
Andrew Roberts – Wirral Council  
Cathy Hughes – Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre  
Janet Devine – School Governor

The group last met on 15<sup>th</sup> July and is due to meet again in October – date to be confirmed. At the last meeting, the group were briefed on the numbers of two year olds accessing places and looked in detail at some of the processes that have been put in place to ensure that the funding reaches the most vulnerable. The group also considered the DfE Consultation on Early Years Pupil Premium funding which ran from 25<sup>th</sup> June – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014 and members were encouraged to respond. The latest information suggests that the Early Years Pupil Premium for 3 & 4 year old children eligible for free school meals will be £300 per child per year.

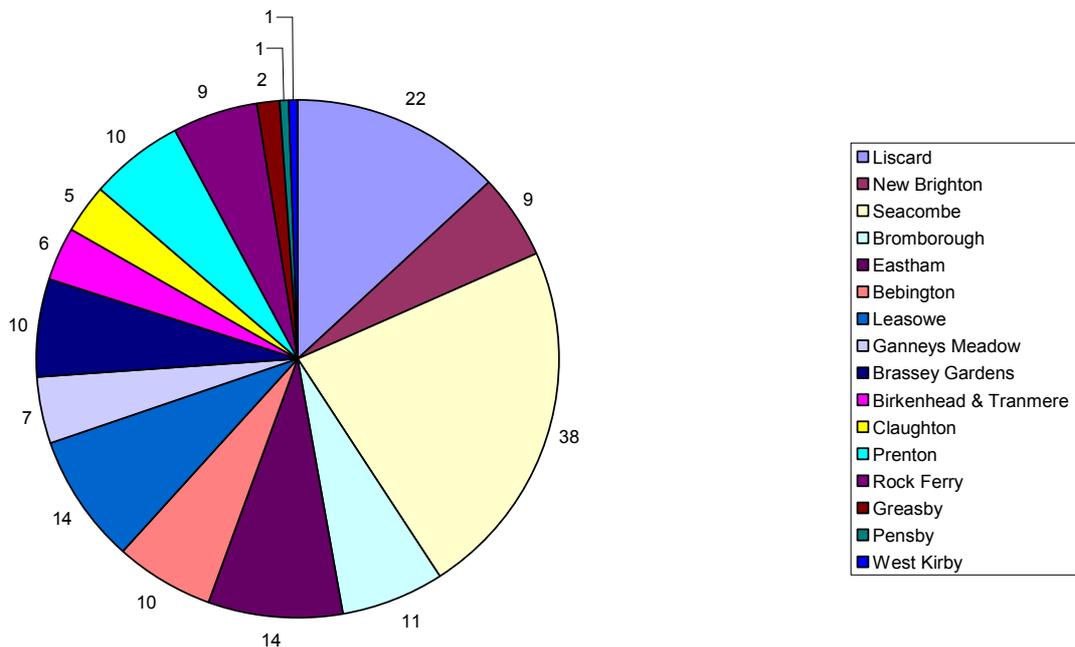
**An overview of progress made in allocation of two year old places:**

**505 children accepted for 2 Year old funding per CC footprint- Summer 13**



**1002 children accepted for 2Year Old funding - Summer 2014**

**Summer 14**  
**Number of new 2yr funded allocations**



**Recommendation**

That Forum notes the report

Julia Hassall  
Director of Children's Services