

Early Years Schools Forum working group meeting 26th June 2017

Present: Andrew Roberts, Margaret Morris, Jill Billinge, Sheila Robinson, Michael Forber, Lynn Ireland, Nicky Prance, Simon Davies, Penny Bishop, Sarah Harper, Carol Fenlon, Shaun Allen

Early Years Inclusive Practice grant - current arrangements

DfE require all local authorities to have a local SEN Inclusion Fund by April 2017 to support providers improve outcomes for young children with SEN. Wirral has had an Inclusion Fund for a number of years.

In 2016/17 rates paid to providers were £3.85 per hour for 3/4 year olds. £86k was paid to 3 nursery schools in 16/17 for 68 children. £100k was paid to PVI's in 16/17 for 91 children (approx. 40 FTE). Only 10 of the children in PVI's were supported for the full year. Numbers per setting are higher in nursery schools than PVI's, partly due to children being referred into nursery schools by doctors following SEN assessments.

Providers submit a claim, and funding is based on a review by the assessment team. It is felt within the sector that the system is poor, with the application process being too time-consuming, especially when providers have to reapply each term. The process is also retrospective as 2 terms evidence has to be provided before funding can be accessed.

Resources available

The 2016/17 budget was £292k. In 2017/18 budget has increased to £450k (excluding DAF), so the potential is there to review and enhance the current system.

Extended offer from September 2017

The purpose of the inclusion fund is to enable children to access early education. The extra 15 hours is for childcare. The fund will therefore remain alongside the core offer, but not the extended hours. Comments from some of the group were they see 'education' as being holistic and an offer which is needed throughout the day.

Changes to funding applications and assessment panels

150 children were identified as having additional needs in 16/17. The primary intake is about 3,500 and about 11% of children are believed to have additional needs. On this basis there are 200 children not yet identified. Settings believe this is partly because providers think that by the time they actually receive the funding the child will have moved into Foundation year. Work needs to be done on early identification, both early in a child's age, but also early in their time at a setting. This could involve training for providers, and raising the profile of the SENCO.

Proposed ideas include reviewing the application process to improve the quality of applications, reviewing the process of issuing funds, one-off annual payments that

are front-loaded rather than retrospective, raising profile of early identification to alleviate the need for EHCPs, a more frequent award panel. Consideration points for the review panel are how often they meet, who would sit on the panel and the consistency of the approach;

Annual payments rather than termly applications would be beneficial for providers, but the child is awarded the payment, not the setting so **the payment would follow the child** in the event of a child changing providers.

Funding bands could be introduced that are linked to needs. However differentiation between children is difficult as younger children naturally have more needs, and needs become more noticeable as children get older and the gap widens.

Early Years and providers need to be able to measure the impact of funding and show positive outcomes. It is felt there needs to be a simple process that can show how the funding is used and what difference it has made to the child.

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

This fund supports children with disabilities, and is a one-off £615 payment for children aged 3 or 4 in receipt of Disability Living Allowance and receiving Early Years Funding Entitlement. There is a DAF budget of £100k for 17/18. Payment is reliant on a setting providing necessary information, and eligibility checks will be made before a payment is processed. A letter will be sent to providers advising of the process along with forms to enable them to claim the money.

Early Years Funding Entitlement Agreement

This has been produced as a best practice guidance document. Unlike in previous years when the document has just been sent to PVI's, this will also be issued to maintained primary and nursery schools with Foundation 1 classes. The document has attracted the interest of parents. It could be published on the Council website, as it is in other Local Authorities. The agreement is based on DfEs model.

An Early Years Funding consultation will include questions on:

- The Inclusion Fund

- Monthly payments

- Increase in the pass-through rate from 93% to 95% from April 2018.

- A local requirement for providers to offer places after headcount date should they have places available.

Next Steps and Timescales

Consultation questions will be drawn up with the intention of issuing the consultation mid-July running until mid-September so the findings can be reported to Schools Forum at the end of September.