

**WIRRAL COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM – 4th July 2018
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN
EARLY YEARS SUFFICIENCY AND FUNDING UPDATE**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the School Forum of discussions at the recent Early Years working group meeting, 4th June 2018 around the following; central staffing costs, Inclusive Practice Fund, Disability Access Fund and the Base Rate for early entitlement funding.

2.0 CENTRAL STAFFING COSTS;

Since the setup of the Early Years Business and Quality improvement team there have been significant policy developments in relation to the Local Authorities early years statutory requirements, specifically delivering on the 30 hour (additional 15 hours) model, for eligible working families.

In April 2017 the Schools Forum approved an additional allocation of 140K for some start up projects, in the main dedicated to the implementation of the 30 hour model. Inclusive was the introduction of a project officer post which would implement, embed and oversee the functionalities of the 30 hour offer. As this is still in its infancy, with the expectation there will be further growth it has been timely to review this post and those others within the central team structure.

As a result it has been identified that to effectively fulfil all the business functionalities within the statutory requirements 3 project officer roles with designated themes would be most effective;

- X1 FTE - 2 year funded –existing post
- x1 FTE - 30 hour offer – temporary post to move to permanent
- x1 FTE - cohort tracking and sufficiency – create as a new post

To achieve this proposal it would be required to retain the 140k allocated within 17-18 as a year on year addition to the central staffing costs, with consideration it remains within the permitted 5% pass through rate.

Furthermore, the fund would also allow a deeper dive into central staffing gaps.

3.0 INCLUSIVE PRACTICE FUND;

3.1 For 18/19 the allocated budget is unchanged at £450k. Following a review of processes to access the fund, which included opening it up to children in F1 nursery class provision in Primary schools, it was agreed an award would be for an extended period of an academic year rather than across a term. Consequently the roll out of processes to the wider sector presented with some delay to referrals coming in at the start of the academic year of 17/18, resulting with a variance at year end of £181,501.

It was proposed to safeguard this into 18/19 as given the projections of on average hourly rate of £4.30 per hour, for a maximum of 15 hours per week across 38 weeks per term the potential is to support 184 children across the academic year.

4.0 DISABILITY ACCESS FUND;

4.1 The Disability Access Fund was introduced in 2017, where a one off payment of £615 would be accessible to families where a child has a disability and can demonstrate accessing Disability Living Allowance benefit.

Central government devolved £96k to Wirral for DAF in 2017-18. To date; £41,820 has been awarded, equating to 68 children supported. It is not expected that the Department for Education will recoup of variances in this budget (subject to review in July 18). Therefore to further maximise this budget the proposal is to roll over the remainder in order to issue one off purchases of specialist equipment to a setting where a child requires a medical item to aid access into their free 3+4 early years education.

5.0 BASE RATE;

5.1 Despite there being variances in year of the take up of 2, 3 + 4 year funded placements it is recognised that the full costs of funding the extended offer have not yet actualised resulting in applying caution to the budget. As a result the base rate will remain as set however it is acknowledged that the sector are absorbing increased pressures in terms of pay awards, pensions and business rates/rents therefore it will remain as an option to review year on year.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Forum agrees to secure the £140k into central staffing costs year on year in order to re-model the central staffing functions.

6.2 Forum agrees to maximise both the Inclusive Practice Fund and Disability Access Fund as carry forwards to continue to support SEND children into the new processes.

Paul Boyce
Corporate Director for Children