

**WIRRAL COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM – 25th September 2019
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN
EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the School Forum on discussions at the recent Early Years working group meeting, 6th September 2019 on the following matters; ***core staffing arrangements, Quality supplement consultation, Extended Eligibility for 2-year olds, Inclusive Practice Funding, Projects from grant awards by Department for Education (DfE).***

2.0 EARLY YEARS CORE STAFFING STRUCTURE

2.1 The Early Years Business core staffing posts have now been filled with x3 Business Officers with thematic of; ***vulnerable 2-year old funding, 30 hours funding for working parents and cohort tracking and sufficiency reporting.*** The dedicated Family Information Service (FIS) administration post (funded through a different stream) remains vacant due to a wider Council review of administration roles and responsibilities.

3.0 EARLY YEARS FREE ENTITLEMENT CONSULTATION – QUALITY SUPPLEMENT

3.1 The quality supplement consultation commenced on Friday 6th September with all providers, it will run up until the October 2019 half term. This is to refresh and be consistent in the application of the quality award in relation to who holds it in a setting, hands on time spent on children's outcomes and contribution to continued professional development of workforce. Previous consultations have had very low level of returns, so this will be closely monitored during the timescale.

3.2 In the recent spending review release it was *stated* "The government will also increase early years spending by 66million to increase the hourly rate paid to childcare providers through the governments free hours offers." Therefore, it was suggested that once Wirral is aware of the monetary value a further consultation would commence later in the year on the base rate and potentially the application of the flexible supplement, as previously explored.

4.0 EXTENDED ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE 2-YEAR FUNDING ENTITLEMENTS

4.1 The DfE has recently extended the assessment criteria for eligibility to the following categories;

- Children of Zambrano Carers (*for instance; the primary carer of a British Citizen child of dependent adult where requiring the primary carer to leave the UK would force that British citizen to leave the European Economic Area (EEA).*)
- Children of families with no recourse to public funds with a right to remain in the UK on grounds of private/family life under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human right
- Children of a subset of failed asylum seekers (supported under section 4 of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999)

This is in line with the Local Authorities Regulations 2014, whereas the duty is to secure Early Years Provision free of charge when criteria met.

5.0 INCLUSIVE PRACTICE FUNDING (IPF)

5.1 There continues to be improved early identification of children needing additional funding support for them to take up their free 15 hours early education entitlements. At the end of Summer term around 160 children (*increase of 30 from Spring term*) had been awarded funding support across pre-schools, nurseries and F1's in schools.

5.2 Furthermore, there were around 24 children who had enhanced transition funding support for the first half term, as they entered F2. Transitional funding requests were endorsed to the IPF panel following transition meetings with EY's SEND Officer, parents, providers and schools. As this was a new process for the Academic year of 19/20 the criteria will be reviewed and the capacity within the budget to continue this process in 20/21.

6.0 DfE Grant Funded Projects

6.1 Wirral's Early Years has been successful in the bid to roll out the **Professional Development Fund (PDF)** programme of creating "**Communication Champions**" across the early years sector. The bid has drawn down approx. £480,000 from DfE and will be operated across a period of 18 months.

6.2 The fund will support the release of staff, through backfill, to engage with the programme and take up the "**Champion**" role of cascading to peers through training and 1-1 support. Expressions of interest have gone out to around 45 settings in the first instance to work with Elklan, who have been awarded the communication specialism contract by DfE, on the programme.

6.3 In addition, Wirral has in partnership with 7 primary schools secured £1,3 million pounds through the **School Nursery Capital Fund (SNCF)** bid. This fund is to either develop or extend school based funded places for 2 + 3-year olds. Announcements of these awards will follow in early October, following the finalisation of details through the DfE.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Forum to note the report.

Paul Boyce – Corporate Director for Children