

**WIRRAL COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM – 15th January 2020
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update the School's Forum on discussions at the recent Early Years working group meeting, 20th December 2019, on the following matters; ***update of 2, 3- and 4-year funding, Quality supplement consultation, Inclusive Practice and Disability Access Funding and updates on Early Years Business Projects.***

2.0 UPTAKE OF 2, 3- AND 4-YEAR FUNDING ENTITLEMENTS

2.1 Whilst access to free early educational entitlements remains strong across Wirral there were fluctuations across the Summer and Autumn terms as outlined below;

2-year old take-up - Wirral actual 80.96% - National 68%

- Reduction in Summer 2018 and 2019.
- Increase in Autumn 2018 and 2019.

3/4-year old Universal take-up – Wirral actual 95.60% - National 93.50%

- Reduction in Summer 2018 and 2019.
- Increase in Autumn 2018 and 2019.

3/4-year old Extended take-up – actual 95.46% - National % (not available at time of report)

- Increase in Summer 2018 and 2019.
- Reduction in Autumn 2018 and 2019.

All %'s are above National and in line with statistical neighbours. To add, 97.20% of Wirral's EY settings (PVI/childminders) have Ofsted judgements as being “**good**” or “**outstanding**” presently.

3.0 EARLY YEARS FREE ENTITLEMENT CONSULTATION – QUALITY SUPPLEMENT

3.1 There was an improved response of 75 to this consultation but acknowledged a small minority in comparison to number of settings, which on average is around 440.

3.2 There was an overwhelming response to the supplement being applied per setting, where they demonstrate having either an Early Years Professional (EYP). Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) or Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Therefore, owners of more than one setting and childcare chains will need to identify a person per setting, not as currently having one shared across a multiple of sites.

3.3 As a result of above it is anticipated that the claim for the quality supplement could reduce, for a short period, whilst settings identify or indeed employ/develop a qualified staff to mark the claim against. Any underspend, as aforementioned will be considered in the Spring of next year along with increased base rate consideration.

- 3.4** It was also agreed that the dedicated person should have a set amount of direct time with children and practitioners in settings, however there were variations to this so not concluded at this stage. This will be revisited with providers in the Spring term.
- 3.5** There was an anomaly identified within the last question, as it did not lock down the options, resulting in a slight skew to the response of where any supplement underspend would be applied. Subsequently, given the imminent funding increase to base rate through the proposed 66 million to be distributed across LA's any redistribution of underspend will be considered at this time.
- 3.6** In summary, the quality rate will remain the same for next year. Number of setting who will qualify, will potentially decrease for a short period based on the new criteria. Any underspend of supplement as a result of changes to criteria will be reviewed during 2020/21.

4.0 INCLUSIVE PRACTICE + DISABILITY ACCESS FUNDS (IPF/DAF)

4.1 IPF - Currently there are around 141 children benefiting from this fund and will move across to the Spring term in receipt of it. Given the positive increase of early identification of children's needs and access to financial resource to support, caution will be required at the Spring term panel. If this rate of increased take up continues it could place a projected overspend of £38,000 in year, however with £140,000 reserve this will reduce risk. As a result, the EY working group proposed the post of Inclusion Officer, which due to recruitment freeze has not been filled, will be placed on hold to take pressure off this budget.

4.2 DAF – There has been a slight increase of children claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) identifying themselves to their childcare provider as eligible for this fund, 29 in Autumn term (+4 children). A proportionate, 10k, of this fund supports the Mediquip contract of specialist equipment for 3 + 4-year olds in settings. A further 40k of this fund is accessible by the Portage workers to support 0-3's with specialised equipment in their homes. A discussion took place and was agreed in principle to further utilise this fund for vulnerable 2-year olds accessing their free funding entitlements and requiring adaptations to do so.

5.0 UPDATE ON EARLY YEARS BUSINESS PROJECTS

5.1 Department for Education, Professional Development Fund – is a high quality CPD programme focused on improving workforce skills in language development, early literacy & numeracy.

There will be 45 settings trained at completion of programme, of which 12 will become language champions and cascade learnt skills across the sector. There was a delay in information coming from the Department for Education (DfE) during Purdah which did result in a drift of starting the programme and some settings losing interest. However, the early years team have been very proactive in filling places for this great opportunity.

5.2 Early Years Funding Entitlement Agreement

This is in draft stage and reviewed by the working group; some changes will be made to section 15.7, in relation to impact of inaccuracies in headcount returns by a minority of settings on payment timeframes. It was felt this negates settings who consistently return accurate reports and feel should not be penalised by others. Once an amend to wording has

been agreed the draft will be released for wider consultation on 10th January, to the full sector.

5.3 School Nursery Capital Fund

There have been no further updates from DfE regarding this Capital Fund, in the main due to Purdah.

5.3 Early Years Social Mobility – SLCN Pathway

By support of The Communication Trust and working in partnership with Cheshire East and Warrington, Wirral's response to "**closing the word gap**" is well underway, through a multi-agency working group developing a SLCN pathway and CPD programme.

To date there has been;

- **Health Visitor SLCN training** - Delivered by Institute of HV – approx. 20 across Wirral trained.
- 175 practitioners access the commissioned "**Finding my Child's Hidden Voice**" programme – delivered by Dr Helen Bibby which is a foundation of the SLCN CPD pathway.
- 3 SLCN local area partnership **action learning sets** - shared practice opportunities.
- **SLCN working group** set up for Wirral from the above – to develop the pathway from universal to specialist support.
- Wirral is 1 of only a few Local Authorities chosen to review the Public Health England and DfE Guidance papers - which will support the new **SLCN Assessment Tool** currently being developed by Newcastle University for National rollout Spring 2020
- Wirral is 1 of 6 LA's working in partnership with The National Literacy Trust together with the Foundation Years Trust (FYT) programme to launch the "**Hungry Little Minds**" campaign in February 2020.
- Preparation underway for the revisit by the **LGA Early Years Peer Review** to assess progress from February 2019, in March 2020.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Forum to note the report.

Paul Boyce - Director of Children's Service