

LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Date of meeting: 24 March 2020

Item No 12

Title: Urgent Business

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on Forum decisions/recommendations taken since the last meeting using the urgent business process.

Recommendations

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the report.

Background

This report provides an update on Forum decisions/recommendations taken since the last meeting using the urgent business process.

a) Apprenticeship Levy Protocol for the Transfer of Schools Funding

Previous reports to the Forum have highlighted that the apprenticeship levy funding generated by schools is being underspent by levy paying schools and that there was a significant risk of unused money being returned to central government, under Apprenticeship Levy Regulations.

Members will recall that following recommendations from the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group, the principle of utilising a 'transfer' of upto 25% of school levy funds to assist relevant non-levy paying establishments was supported by the Forum in July 2019. This was judged preferable to unspent funding being returned to the ESFA.

This risk of funding being returned to central government recently became a reality and the LCC Apprenticeship Levy team sought to agree a protocol that could be used to authorise the team to utilise the unspent funding for the benefit of children and young people in Lancashire. As there was no Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group scheduled in the current cycle of working group meetings, the Forum's Urgent Business procedure was utilised.

On 29 January 2020, an email was sent to Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group members, to obtain a view on a draft protocol that could be used in connection with the transfer of 'schools' monies.

The proposals mirrored the processes that has been agreed for LCC transfers and identified groups that have been discussed with the Steering Group previously, with the exception of one addition.

The draft proposal is set out below:

Categories eligible for 'Schools' Apprenticeship Levy Transfer:

- Aided schools situated within the LCC footprint (where possible as limited number due to PAYE issue);
- Academies situated within the LCC footprint;
- Aided schools and academies in Unitary authorities (Blackpool and Blackburn);
- Independent Nurseries/Early years settings;
- Organisations providing support to schools (e.g. PE/Sports providers, SEND support providers, Children's and young people's Mental Health charities).

Process:

Allow the Apprenticeship Levy Team to identify, arrange and authorise unspent levy transfers to be made to the above categories.

Reason for Urgency:

Support for this proposal is being requested via email rather than waiting until the next Steering Group meeting, as we are now paying levy funding back to central government on a monthly basis.

By the requested response date of 14 February 2020, 4 responses had been received from members of the Group.

All responses supported the proposed 'transfer' protocol but a number of the replies asked that the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group be kept updated on the allocation of funds, in particular information about any allocations to and more detail around 'Organisations providing support to school'.

Having reviewed the responses, the Apprenticeship Levy Team will proceed with the schools levy transfer arrangements, but due to the uncertainties expressed, will not now include 'Organisations providing support to schools' in the eligible categories. This group remain eligible for support from transfers from the LCC levy.

The next meeting of the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group is scheduled for June 2020.