

Item 14

Recommendations of the Early Years Block Working Group

Contact for further information:
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Brief Summary

On 8 June 2023, the Early Years Block Working Group considered a number of reports, including

Recommendation

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the Information

Detail

On 8 June 2023, the Early Years Block Working Group considered a number of reports. A summary of the information presented, and the Working Group's recommendations are provided below:

1. Matters Arising from the Last meeting

Early Years Recruitment

Recent Early Years recruitment advertising campaign has received over 3000 hits. However, it hasn't not led to any recruitment. A social media campaign is being arrange and posters are being sent to setting to widen the campaign.

2. High Needs Block Supplementary Grant Task and Finish Group



Following discussions with the Forum, it was agreed that the High Needs Supplementary Grant would be calculated in two parts:

- A payment to all Special Schools and PRU's as per the DfE guidance and conditions of grant.
- A further allocation of a WPN element of additional high needs funding for Primary and Secondary schools, as well as the FE Colleges, will follow a similar process as last year but with additional consideration for Early Years settings for pupils with EHCP plans.

Using this methodology, £2.5m remained unallocated. During the Spring Term Forum meetings, it was agreed to set up a task and finish group to allocate the remaining funding.

In Summary the funding was allocated;

- £600k to create two central Inclusion Engagement Support Teams to support children without an Educational Health Care Plans, funded for one year.
- £400k allocated to Y11/12 transition teams for Alternative Provision schools, administered through SEND central team.
- £150k Support for transition between EYFS/Reception to be funded through the inclusion hub banker schools.
- £300k Support for transition between Y6/7 to be to be funded through the inclusion hub banker schools.
- £1,050,000 to be transferred back to Reserves for High Needs Block.

The letter found in Appendix B was sent to all schools on 30th March and the minutes, Appendix A, was distributed to members and will be reported at the Full Forum in July.

Following conversations with the High Needs and Early Years working group a number of concerns were raised regarding the distribution of the transitional funds by the Inclusion Hubs.

Originally the LA is proposed to reconvene the High Needs Block Task and Finish group to establish a best practice to distribute the transitional funding. Officers attended the Inclusion Hub District meeting on 22nd June 2023, each district hub in attendance provided a brief update on their plans for the funding. Once the information has been received from all district hubs, it will be provided to the schools Forum. A report will also be provided in December to review the funding.

In addition, the IEST Teams are currently being recruited and should be operational by the Autumn Term.

Further discussion around Early Years Transition Included;

The number of children at risk of exclusion in reception are significantly increasing. The Early Years team is arranging crisis support meetings for Nursery Teachers in the Autumn Term

It was also noted that allocating reception places for SEND children for September is challenging, however, the early years inclusion team are aware of these issues.



The Forum is asked to:

a) Note the information

3. Early Years Funding Claims Internal Audit

An audit of the school's early years funding claims for 2, 3 & 4 year old children was undertaken by the Council in April 2023. The audit was conducted in conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. This report outlines the process that was carried out, the audit findings, and the actions that now need to be carried out by the school.

Scope of Audit

The scope of the audit was to review and test the adequacy and effectiveness of the processes established by the school for submitting early years funding claims during the period autumn 2021 to spring 2023 focussing on the following control areas:

- Claims submitted via the portal;
- Parental agreement completion; and
- Date of birth checks.

Area of Audit	Findings	Action Points
Claims submitted via the Portal	<p>There were incorrect claims made for 16 of the 35 children that had attended the nursery at different times between autumn 2021 and spring 2023.</p> <p>The hours claimed for were more than the hours stated on the parental agreement form, resulting in an overpayment of £16,636.52</p>	1, 2, 3, 5
Completion of parental agreements	<p>Whilst a 'parental agreement' was available for all children that had attended the nursery since autumn 2021, the information included on the form and completion of them was inconsistent.</p> <p>Three different types of parental agreement forms were in use across the period examined with varying levels of detail. Most of the forms had not been signed by a representative of the nursery, with some not signed by a parent either.</p>	4



Action Point	Action Required	Timescale
1	<p>The school is required to re-pay the overclaim amount of £16,636.52 split over 2 financial years.</p> <p>Budget adjustments of £8,318.26 will be made in the current financial year (23-24) and the next financial year (24-25).</p>	June 2023 & April 2024
2	The school must ensure that all personnel involved in the submission of early years claims have read and understand the terms and conditions of funding outlined in the Schools Memorandum of Understanding for the Provision of Early Education Funding.	May 2023
Child date of birth checks	<p>The school suggested that birth certificates are checked when a child joins the nursery. Apart from for three children, there was no evidence that such checks had taken place.</p> <p>The school did not retain copies of birth certificates and two of the different types of parental agreement forms in use across the period reviewed did not allow for such a check to be recorded.</p> <p>Copies of evidence of a child's date of birth are expected to be retained by nursery providers in order to support its Early Education Funding claims and to ensure satisfactory audit trails.</p>	6

Actions Required

3	The school must ensure that all future headcount and supplementary claims are submitted in line with the terms and conditions of funding outlined in the Schools Memorandum of Understanding for the Provision of Early Education Funding.	May 2023
4	<p>The school must ensure that a fully completed parental agreement (as supplied by LCC) is in place for all early years children that access a funded place at the nursery.</p> <p>The parental agreement must be signed by the parent and a representative of the school, and parents must be given a copy.</p>	May 2023



5	Where a child is accessing less than their full entitlement of 15 or 30 hours per week, the school must ensure they only claim the hours as specified and agreed in the parental agreement.	May 2023
6	<p>Prior to agreeing a funded place, the school must ensure the child is age eligible, and see evidence of the child's date of birth (e.g. birth certificate/passport).</p> <p>A copy of the d.o.b evidence must be held by the school for audit purposes as outlined in section 14 of the Schools Memorandum of Understanding for the Provision of Early Education Funding.</p>	May 2023

Outcome

Following the Audit review, the Early Years Parental Funding Agreement, Terms and Conditions and guidance notes have been reviewed

4. Any other Business

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) Conference

Potentially a further 60,000 children eligible for the additional early provision funding from September 2023 with approximately 10% of the children with need additional support. This was noted as a severe risk to the Local Authority across the Early Years Sectors.

