

Meeting: Schools Forum
Date: 24 March 2014
Subject: Report on Activity during 2013 of Early Years Reference Group
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Summary: To note the update on the activity of the Early Years Reference Group

Contact Officer: Sue Tyler Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The forum note the report on the activity of the Early Years Reference Group
2. To agree in principle the use of Contingency to increase the base rate

1. The Early Years reference Group met on three occasions during 2013.

Two Year Olds

2. The Two Year Old Initiative was a main agenda item at each meeting. The original target had been set at 449 places for the 20% most deprived two year olds from September 2013. This number was to increase in September 2014 to 889 places for the 40% most deprived children. The attendance is for 15 hours per week in term time. Considerable work had been carried out during 2012 and 2013 to ensure sufficient places. However it became clear during the latter part of 2013 that identifying the appropriate children would prove an even greater challenge. The group were told that the Department for Education had sent out letters on two occasions with time-limited data which could be used by the council to identify and make contact with families. On the first occasion the Department identified 182 families with children and on the second 282. This clearly fell somewhat short of the 449 children in the target group.
3. The criteria for the first 20% were set nationally and included families accessing Income Support, Income based Job Seekers Allowance, Child Tax Credit where the family income was no more than £16,190 p.a., the disability element of Working Tax Credit, Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit. In addition Children who were LAC or on Child Protection Plans were also able to access the free offer.

4. In preparation for the further rollout of the offer in September 2014 the Early Years Reference Group agreed the extension of the criteria in line with government recommendations to cover in addition to the above criteria, those which enable eligibility for Free School Meals namely: Working Tax Credit (with the income level below £16,190), Income related Employment and Support Allowance, Disability Living allowance, children who have a statement of education need or an education, health and care plan, children who have left care through special guardianship, adoption or residence orders. It was agreed that these additional criteria would be introduced with effect from Jan 2014 in order to increase the numbers of two year olds accessing the offer.
5. Reports were given to the group of the considerable publicity which has been Undertaken including, leaflet drops in appropriate areas, posters everywhere, side of bus advertising, and radio advertsising. Referrals have been extended from being received just via Childrens Centres, to include health visitors and self-referrals. Groups are now being incentivised to refer children.

Early Years Funding

6. No changes to the overall funding formula was discussed at the group during 2013. However minor changes to early years funding levels were noted. During 2013 there was a one off payment of an additional 10p per child/hour in the base rate paid, due to a carried forward sum available. Prior to this rates had been static since the introduction of the formula, and the proposed funding for 2014/15 enabled an increase of 5p per hour, which the Early Years Reference Group will be asked to approve at its forthcoming meeting, along with a change in emphasis in the Social Deprivation payment, for the highest level of need from 20p perchild/hour to 40p per child/hour. At this stage of the financial year it is anticipated that there may be a carried forward contingency sum which would enable a an additional 5p per hour to be put onto the base rate for PVIs. The Schools Forum is asked to agree in principle to this increase if there is a contingency. The proposal will also be put to the Early Years Reference Group at its meeting in March.

This would bring the rates to:

| Type | Base Rate per Hour | |
|----------------|--------------------|----------|
| | Non - Flexible | Flexible |
| Nursery School | £3.35 | £3.40 |
| Primary School | £3.35 | £3.40 |
| PVI | £3.70 | £3.85 |

Social deprivation

Three levels using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) January 2013 data

- 40p per hour for the 0-30% most disadvantaged (increased by 20p in 2014/15)
- 15p per hour for 31-60% disadvantaged and (increased by 5p from 2014/15)
- 0p per hour for remaining 61-100%.

The social deprivation element is based upon the level of disadvantage where a child lives (postcode) and follows the child to the setting they attend.

Quality

The quality factor applies to PVI's only and is at three levels:

- 20p per hour to qualified teacher (QTS) and early years graduate with early years professional status (EYP)
- 15p per hour to an early years graduate without EYP and
- 10p per hour to a level 4

It should be noted that Nursery and Lower Schools are paid a substantial Lump Sum which is not paid to PVIs, and Rates costs are also covered for Maintained Settings.

Recommendation:

The Schools Forum is requested to approve in principle the use of the Contingency Fund to enable an additional 5p per funded hours to be added to the rates paid to the PVIs, once the level of the carried forward contingency is established.

More Great Childcare and More Affordable Childcare

7. These government documents were consulted on during the course of the year, and then guidance published. There was considerable national controversy around proposals to reduce ratios, although these were eventually dropped after vigorous debates within the coalition government. In the main there were not substantive changes required to the local funding agreement in Central Bedfordshire as localised rules had not been introduced as part of the funding framework. The most major change was that Childminders could provide funded hours as long as they had good or outstanding Ofsted grades, regardless of being qualified or in a network which were the former national criteria.
8. The Group approved the local agreement which was updated in line with the new national framework to cover two, three and four year olds. This included Settings which require improvement only being able to take two year olds if there are no places in good or outstanding settings in the local area.
9. The group discussed and expressed concern about the appropriateness of school settings for two year olds in some cases.

Tribal

10. The Group received reports that during 2013 the Tribal database and collection system went live. This enabled groups to complete their census and headcount data on line. It was latterly also used to calculate the payments due.

Setting Support

11. The Group approved the Support Strategy which provides for intensive support for settings who Require Improvement or are Inadequate.

12 Two Year Old Conference

The Group received a report on the very successful provider conference which had taken place in February 2013 as part of the programme around the extension of the Two Year Old offer.

Childcare Funding Panel

13. The Childcare Funding Panel met on three occasions in 2013.
Over the year it approved funding in the following categories:

Inclusion: £45,436

New Childcare Places: £76,800 (including places for 2 year olds)

Quality Improvements: £44,214

Sustainability: £117,611

Capital for Two year old Expansion: £210,000

Appendices:

None