

**Meeting:** Schools Forum  
**Date:** 26 January 2015  
**Subject:** Report on Activity during 2014 of Early Years Reference Group and proposal to increase funding rates

**Report of:** Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services  
**Summary:** To note the update on the activity of the Early Years Reference Group and to agree the proposed funding changes

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 the increase in base funding rates.**

1. The Early Years reference Group met on three occasions during 2014.

**Two Year Olds**

2. The Two Year Old Initiative was a main agenda item at each meeting. Central Bedfordshire had been notified of a target of between 850-1000 two year olds who would be eligible for funding from September 2014. This figure relates to the 40% most deprived children, who should be accessing places by the end of the summer term in 2015.

Work had continued throughout the year on both ensuring sufficient places and increasing the take-up. Regular lists are sent through from the Department for Education which have come from the Department for Work and pensions which give full details of parents meeting the criteria. These lists are able to be used for just a three week time window in which parents can be contacted, and details can be passed to Children's Centres who assist in contacting hard to reach parents in this period.

The numbers sent on the list vary each time and the most recent list contained approx. 913 names.

During the Autumn Term of 2014 the numbers of two year olds taking up the offer was 647 which is a higher pro rata proportion than many of our neighbours.

3. During 2014 the government confirmed the criteria for the 40% places which were for parents claiming
- income Support
  - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
  - income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
  - support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
  - the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income not over £16,190
  - the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
  - Working Tax Credits and earn £16,190 a year or less

Children are also entitled to a place if:

- they're looked after by a local council
  - they have a current statement of special education needs (SEN) or an education health and care plan
  - they get Disability Living Allowance
4. 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 advertising. Adverts have also been placed on the backs of bus tickets and nationally there has been advertising on the back of Argos receipts. A Twitter and Facebook presence has also been launched with the help of the Communications Team at Central Bedfordshire Council.

Groups and Childminders are now being incentivised to refer children.

### **Early Years Funding**

5. During 2013 there had been 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. The Schools Forum and Early Years reference group approved an increase of 5p per hour on all base rates at their meetings in march 2014, along with a change in emphasis in the Social Deprivation payment, which doubled the rate of payment for Social Deprivation for children in the highest areas of need.

At the October meeting an adjustment to the funding levels, within the same formula, were discussed.

During the previous year some pre-schools had been taken over and run by a lower school. This had brought to the surface the fact that schools receive a lower hourly rate for children attending than the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) groups. Schools do receive an amount to fund a senior management, and payments for rates, utilities and administration as part of a school formula. An amount for these costs had been paid as a lump sum to PVI's, but were deemed as inappropriate and the base rate therefore increased. However this differential was now seen as too large.

6. It was therefore proposed to increase the hourly base rate for PVI's by 5p per child/hour and for schools by 15p per child/hour. This would maintain a differential in the hourly rate in favour of the PVI's to cover the items which were previously paid for by the lump sum, but reduce the differential so that taking over a pre-school was not seen as unattractive by schools.

This would bring the rates to:

Type	Base Rate per Hour	
	Flexible	Non-Flexible
Nursery School	£3.55	£3.50.
Primary School	£3.55	£3.50
PVI	£3.90	£3.75

It was not proposed to change the rates for Social deprivation or quality.

### **Recommendation**

**The Schools Forum is requested to approve the increase in the base rates as outlined**

### **Ofsted and DfE**

7. The group was appraised of Ofsted and government consultations which took place through the year and the Group approved the local agreement which was updated in line with the new national framework to cover two, three and four year olds which took effect in September 2014. 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.

A revision of the EYFS is anticipated for September 2015 which may include changes in relation to Out of School Clubs, and ratio and qualification requirements. It may also include increasing requirement for registration to 3 hours.

Changes to the current schools requirement to go on the Early Years Register to take 2 year olds will not happen until at least September 2015.

### **Setting Support**

8. The Group received reports about the success of the Support Strategy which provides for intensive support for settings who Require Improvement or are Inadequate, and the outcomes for settings and Childminders following inspection, where good and outstanding outcomes are higher than our neighbours, statistical neighbours and the national average.

### **Two Year Old Conference**

9. The Group actively discussed the plans to run two half day provider conferences which took place in November 2014 on the extension of the Two Year Old offer. One of these was specifically aimed at schools who are taking two year olds in increasing numbers, and at Childminders.

## **Network Meetings**

10. Two network meetings on the same topic are held each term in different parts of the Council area. In the spring term the topic was Literacy and Communication, in the summer term Fun on a shoestring and in the autumn term the topic was Ofsted and Partnerships. Attendance is improving each time and the feedback is that the meetings are always very well received.

## **Childcare Funding Panel**

11. The Childcare Funding Panel met on two occasions since March 2014. Over the year it approved funding in the following categories:

The Childcare Funding Panel met on two occasions since March 2014. Over the year it approved funding in the following categories:

- Inclusion: £48,296
- New Childcare Places: £46,200 (including places for 2 year olds)
- Quality Improvements: £24,657
- Sustainability: £38,500
- Capital for Two year old Expansion: £447,330

## **Appendices:**

None