

<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing</b>
<b>Decision date:</b>	<b>6 March 2018</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Allocation of 2 year nursery education fund</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Early Years Policy and Strategy Manager</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **Wards affected**

All wards

## **Purpose and summary**

To agree that a two year underspend in the dedicated school grant (early years pot) of £890k funding will be used to fund Solihull training, speech and language and training for early years professionals and parents.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- (a) the £890,000 underspend in dedicated schools grant funding for nursery education for two year olds be applied, as recommended by Schools Forum, to support the following:**

- i. **an early years speech and language service for children aged 2 to 5 be commissioned for a period of up to three years at a total cost of £590,000 with effect from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2018**
  - ii. **a one-off fund of £200,000 be established to support early years training and conferences for parents and practitioners;**
  - iii. **the Solihull approach be delivered across multi-disciplinary teams and online Solihull training for parents be offered at a cost of £70k birth resolution trauma training for professionals be delivered at a cost of £30k; and**
- (b) the director for children's wellbeing be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the above recommendations, including procurement and award of contract, within the approved budget allocations.**

## **Alternative options**

1. The underspend could be used to fund pressures in the high needs block; however, this was debated at schools forum and it was agreed that the funding should be used for early years.
2. Share the underspend amongst all registered early years providers (over 90 in total across Herefordshire and over 100 childminders). This is not deemed to be good value for money, as there would be little impact due to the small amount of funds each provider would receive if it was shared.

## **Key considerations**

3. The county is continuing to implement the schools national funding formula. Part of the funding formula provides funding for early years, including supporting the national policy to increase the take up of two year old nursery places.
4. When the national policy for two year old nursery places was launched funding was provided to an anticipated take up level. Actual take up was less than this. This was experienced across the country as well as in Herefordshire. This has resulted in an underspend of £890,000
5. The underspend is part of the dedicated school grant (DSG). DSG grant conditions apply such that it can only be spent on schools, high needs children or early years.
6. Officers have worked with early years and school representatives to consider the most effective way of using the underspend to support improvement in early years outcomes, a key priority for the council and also for the children and young people's partnership. School leaders recognise that improving outcomes prior to school age provides a better platform for successful learning and development through school age education.
7. Schools forum have considered the proposal and support the use of the underspend in this way.
  - a. The proposed use of the underspend aims to address three issues for 0-5 years olds:
    - Speech and language support

- Emerging concerns of maternal mental health
  - Training for parents and professionals
8. Good early language skills are central to children's development and school readiness. They play a crucial role in literacy, a child's ability to achieve their educational potential, their social mobility, and their life chances. However, not all children have the speech, language, and communication skills they need to fully engage with their education.
  9. Language delay can affect a child's readiness for school, as well as their academic performance as they move through the school years, including poor reading and writing skills.
  10. Language delay can affect as many as one in five children. Children living in poverty have a greater incidence of language delay. One in three (35%) do not have the language skills expected of a five year old.
  11. Not supporting children's early language skills, and not identifying long-term or persistent speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), can have an impact on a range of potentially negative outcomes later in life. Research shows that:
    - **offending behaviour** - up to 60% of young people in the youth justice system have communication difficulties.
    - **employment** - 88% of long-term unemployed young men have speech, language and communication needs.
    - **Literacy, mental health, and employment** - vocabulary difficulties at age five are significantly associated with poor literacy, mental health and employment outcomes at age 34.
  12. Birth trauma training of professionals will support improved outcomes for women and their newborns. This is a fully comprehensive, 12 week training programme which offers birth professionals the opportunity to treat birth trauma/PTSD. This is part of an early help approach that supports national directives to improve outcomes for women's perinatal mental health and contributes to the safety collaborative for maternal and infant wellbeing, increasing positive outcomes for families in early healthy relationship building..
  13. The Solihull approach is an evidenced based parenting programme which aims to increase emotional health and wellbeing through both practitioners and parents. It does this through resources and training across the child and family workforce. The majority of health visitors in the UK are now trained in the Solihull Approach model.. The Solihull Approach is included in the UK Department of Health's Healthy Child Programme. It is already practiced in some areas of Herefordshire, with an established trainer-training programme, within the health visiting service. However, we have an opportunity to extend this to a wider range of workers and disciplines and this would help maximise our ability to support families and also ensure consistency across services and disciplines in supporting our families.
  14. The benefits of fully utilising the Solihull approach, means we can:
    - Train all professionals involved across a range of settings
    - Have trainers from across a range of settings to increase sustainability
    - Embed the Solihull approach across a range of disciplines and settings
    - Offer a variety of delivery mechanisms – 1-2-1, group, online

15. After exploring the market and with the limitations associated with a copyrighted training approach, there is only one provider and one “Solihull” programme which hold the licence and material for this. This method is already adopted across some professionals in Herefordshire and we would like it to be cascaded further.
16. **Training for early years professionals and parents** will focus on a number of areas where school leaders and professionals have identified would benefit children. These include effective use of the Pupil Premium and Early Years Pupil Premium, a literacy and maths, to raise boys attainment levels, English as an additional language (EAL),
17. More schools and settings are beginning to take two year old children. There has been demand, both from the private/voluntary sector and schools, to focus training on the needs of children aged two and for children from birth to three in general. This would include a key person working with parents and appropriate environments that support both learning and development of the youngest children in a setting.
18. The process for implementation will involve the following:
  - Draft service specification scoped June 2017
  - Specification agreed January 2018
  - Undertake formal tendering exercise to commence: January 2018
  - Proposed service to commence April 2018 and monitored through a number of measures including the number of children screened and supported through speech and language support and the number of speech and language courses supported and completed.
19. As this is “one off” funding the specification will include opportunities for “training the trainer” and mentoring other professionals, including support for parents to ensure they have an understanding and are supported to cascade good practice in the best ways to support children with speech and language delay to ensure it is sustainable after the contract period.

## Community impact

20. These proposals support the Herefordshire Corporate Plan 2016-2020 key priority to keep children and young people safe and give them the best start in life. It also supports one of the main priorities in the Children and Young People’s Plan around early years and emotional health and wellbeing, the corporate plan, Health and wellbeing strategy. It will support speech and language in the early years and support the reduction in waiting lists and children being screened as identified as a main finding in the recent special educational needs and disability (SEND) Ofsted Inspection in October 2016: “There are unacceptably long waiting lists for some community therapies. For example, some families have been waiting for up to a year to be seen by occupational therapy and speech and language therapy services. This means that many children’s needs remain unassessed and they do not receive timely support.” All children 0-5 years across Herefordshire including our Looked after children will benefit from the additional resource and interventions if identified as having a delay in speech and language and or through support from qualified professionals trained in infant mental health through the Solihull Training approach.
21. The training for parents and practitioners around identified gaps in areas of learning for 0 to 5 year olds, will support and empower parents to help themselves and take more responsibility for their child’s learning and development.

22. Enhanced speech and language screening and support within communities will work towards:
- Developing graduated community support networks that are linked and co-ordinated alongside specialist support
  - Establish improved, information, advice and guidance for parents and practitioners
  - Develop professional support based on wider wellbeing conversations with children and families
23. Improved support for infant mental health through birth trauma training will enable mothers with young babies to be better supported and able to participate in meaningful community activity with their babies and not to feel lonely, isolated whilst improving maternal and infant wellbeing.

## **Equality duty**

24. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
- a. A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
25. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.
26. This proposal pays due regard to our public sector equality duty as set out below and support our most vulnerable children and parents who are in need of support;:
27. Use community resources to deliver training and support based on creating the best outcome for children in need through outreach activity.
28. To have a strong focus on health and improving outcomes, including mental health that could have a significant impact later in life.
29. Promotion of positive health particularly focusing on tackling speech and language, maternal and infant mental health and supporting parents with parenting and raising aspirations and outcomes for the family.

## **Resource implications**

30. Due to a two year underspend through the Dedicated Schools Grant of £890,000, the

Schools Forum, Early Years Strategy Group and Education Strategic Board (made up of school head teachers and early years provider leaders) has recommended that this be spent within the early years remit of 0 to 5 year olds on the proposals in this report.

31. This is a one off grant underspend to be used over a 3 year period 2018 – 2020. The underspend arose because the take up of 2 year old nursery places was less than funded by the government. As the funds come through the dedicated school grant (DSG), the DSG grant conditions apply such that it can only be spent on schools, high needs or early years. Schools forum took the view that the underspend should be spent on early years as the grant was for that age range.

<b>Two year underspend – proposed spend allocation</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Speech and language</b>	£590,000
<b>Infant mental health through:</b>	
<b>Solihull licence and training</b>	£70,000
<b>Birth trauma training</b>	£30,000
<b>Early years training and conferences</b>	£200,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£890,000</b>

## Legal implications

32. Additional funding was provided under the DSG to support the national policy for supported two year old nursery places launched in 2014/15.
33. The DSG is a ring fenced specific grant and must be used in support of the schools budget as defined in the relevant regulations (School and Early year Finance (England) Regulations 2017 are the current regulations in force). This money cannot be used for any other purpose. The Secretary of State has the right to recover grant monies where there is evidence that the council has used it for any purpose other than to support the schools budget or has failed to comply with any other conditions of the grant.
34. The council, in conjunction with the Schools Forum, is responsible for determining how the DSG is split between central expenditure and individual school bodies.
35. The 2017 Regulations defines what the DSG can be spent on (and relevant exemptions), this includes expenditure on early years provision (in so far as that expenditure does not fall within other areas of provision). Further definition on central expenditure is given within Schedule 2 of the regulations and excludes direct expenditure on a school or provider.
36. Early years provision is defined within the Childcare Act of 2006 as the provision of childcare for a young child; with childcare further defined as any form of care for a child including education and supervised activity.

37. The council has statutory duties for early years provision which are also defined within the 2006 Act and include the duty to reduce inequalities and improve the wellbeing of children in its area. With wellbeing defined as including physical, mental health and emotional wellbeing); protection from harm and neglect; education, training and recreation; the contribution made by children to society; and social and economic wellbeing.
38. The council will need to seek confirmation from the DfE that the planned use of the DSG underspend complies with DfE funding regulations regarding the limits on early years central expenditure. This may require the council to formally apply for a formal exemption from the DfE.
39. The procurement and award of any contract must comply with the council's contract procedure rules.

## **Risk management**

40. Risks relating to the implementation of the recommendation are as follows.
41. A shortage of speech and language support and limited trained staff to tackle birth trauma as explained in detail under Key Consideration has an impact on the county's most vulnerable families. There are statutory requirements to support families, specifically young parents, and have a referral process, if families need intervention
42. The funding is a one off grant and will cease. Therefore the spend will be used to train professionals in all three areas which will ensure the longer term sustainability through cascading and sharing information, knowledge and good practice long after the grant ends.
43. There will be no interested providers wishing to take up the speech and language tender opportunity:

## **Consultees**

44. Consultation on the options for the proposed two year spend has been undertaken through the Early Years Policy and Strategy group (EYSG) which is part of the children and young people's partnership. It has member representation from schools, early years providers, speech and language, health visitors, midwifery services, education, early help, children's centre services and social care. Schools Forum have also been consulted. Feedback from the consultation process has concluded that the approach outlined above is the most appropriate use of the underspend. Group leaders have been consulted and the response has been that this is a positive proposal.

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background papers**

None identified