

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to fully fund early years providers which are open at the level they would have expected to receive in the 2020 autumn term had there been no coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in accordance with advice from the Department for Education.
Date of decision:	14 January 2021
Decision maker:	Director for Children and Families
Authority for delegated decision:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an emergency decision because of Covid-19 “Council constitution 3.7.9 all necessary decisions in the case of emergencies”
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The cabinet member for children and young people has been consulted and is in agreement with the decision.</p> <p>The Section 151 officer has been consulted and is in agreement</p>
Decision made:	To explicitly follow Department for Education (DfE) guidance and award additional funding to early years providers which are open at the level they would have expected to see in the 2020 autumn term had there been no coronavirus (COVID-19) funded from Dedicated Schools Grant (£120k) and the Council’s emergency grant funding (£259k)
Reasons for decision:	<p>The (DfE) require that local authorities should continue to fund early years providers which are open at broadly the levels they would have expected to see in the 2020 autumn term had there been no coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Local Authorities should also continue to fund providers which have been advised to close, or left with no option but to close, due to public health reasons. Local authorities should not fund providers which are closed, without public health reason, from the start of the autumn term. The intention is to fund on the basis of ‘as if autumn term 2020 were happening normally’. In order to do this, local authorities might, for example, use the numbers of children in places in the previous autumn to inform funding levels this autumn. Herefordshire will fully fund the difference between funding received in autumn 2019 and that received in autumn 2020.</p> <p>This financial support will be for the autumn term 2020 and be paid retrospectively in January 2021 following any final necessary adjustments to the autumn 2020 payments for actual pupil numbers. The additional cost estimated as £379k. Dedicated Schools Grant will fund £120k which is the difference between that paid out to settings for the autumn term 2020 (£2.45m) and that paid out in autumn 2019 (£2.57m).</p> <p>The shortfall of £259k will be funded from the council’s COVID-19 support funding. DfE is clear that the reasons for funding early years settings at Autumn 2019 levels is due to COVID-19 and we should fund on the basis “as if autumn 2020 were happening normally” when it is clearly not. The shortfall in funding is due to parents keeping their children at home and not attending nursery and also parents who have moved to new nurseries so we are required to fund both the new nursery, where the child is, and to</p>

	<p>maintain past funding to the nursery which the child has left.</p> <p>As at the 12th January 2021 the government have not indicated that any additional funding will be made available to meet this extra cost. However, if additional funding is subsequently received from Government then this will be used prior to the council's emergency COVID fund.</p> <p>The funding and the basis for the spring and summer terms 2021 is as yet not clear. A decision regarding this will need to be taken separately, but current estimate suggests further shortfalls each term of c.£260k.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	The cost of the scheme will be funded by the Council's emergency COVID - 19 funding received from government.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	None
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed

Chris Baird
Director for children and families

Date: 14 January 2021

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