

**SLOUGH SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015**

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**Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**  
**2014-2015 Carry Forward**  
**(Directorate of Wellbeing)**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek agreement from Schools Forum to carry forward funding for two year olds to meet statutory duties.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Forum notes the unspent portion of the two year old funding from 2014-15 and agrees the carry forward to ensure compliance with statutory duties.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the attached Appendix A be approved as outline spending in developing high quality and effective provision for vulnerable two year olds across Slough, which is a national and statutory requirement.

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Local Authority/Cambridge Education is not currently meeting its statutory duty in relation to funded early learning for two year olds and the Department for Education is closely monitoring take-up and development of places in Slough.
- 3.2 The eligibility criteria for funded early learning for two year olds were introduced in September 2013, with a target to create 450 places for the 20% most vulnerable children. Although sufficient places were created in this period, take-up of places was significantly lower than expected. Carry forward from 2013-14 facilitated an effective, targeted marketing strategy and campaign to communicate the offer to parents and to stimulate market demand, which resulted in an increase in take-up of 200 more places.

**Successful strategies included:**

- A town-wide mailout of application forms to 50,000 homes
- Freepost and text service
- Promotional posters, postcards and leaflets
- Community roadshow and short commercial
- Focused brokerage to match families to vacant places

- Improved communication and information sharing with Children's Social Care, health partners and Job Centre Plus.
- 3.2 In September 2014, the DfE increased the target number of places from 450 to 1005. The effectiveness of the work undertaken to address issues of both supply and demand has been recognised by the DfE, but funding from April 2015 is based on participation during January 2015 and there is still much to be done to meet the target, including: creating the required number of places; funding the shortfall between January 2015 participation and the target figure; ensuring sufficient take-up of places; and continuing to market and communicate the offer to parents.
- 3.3 **Place development to meet the target number**  
There are a number of capital projects currently underway, supported by revenue grants (see Appendix A) to expand, extend and refurbish existing providers, which will increase the available number of places to 800 places by September to December 2015. Further development work is required to meet the 1005 target number of places, as funding from the DfE is from April 2015 now based on participation only.
- 3.4 **Marketing**  
Marketing continues to be a high priority to ensure that demand remains high. This will include on-going poster, postcard and leaflet campaigns, publicity materials, an additional borough-wide mailout, newspaper and social media advertising and the use of a commercially produced film in GP surgeries and on Post Office screens. A parental questionnaire will be commissioned to support the accuracy of the 2015 sufficiency assessment.
- 3.5 **Sufficiency and Business Sustainability**  
Assessment of the sufficiency of places is a statutory requirement. Key work needs to be undertaken to ensure that places are developed and available to meet the needs of families in the areas of highest demand. Whilst a number of new providers have expressed an interest in registering new provision and offering funded early learning places, support is required to ensure those businesses are able to offer a viable and compliant proposal, in addition to longer term sustainability.
- 3.6 **Brokerage**  
The Early Years Service provides focused brokerage to families who have been offered a place but have not taken it up. This is a vital element of increasing take-up and will require significant additional capacity to meet DfE timescales.
- 3.7 **Quality**  
The DfE expects that all eligible two year olds are placed in settings judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted. Whilst the quality of existing providers has risen overall in the past year, sustained

input will be needed and targeted or intensive support will be required from the Early Years Service for all providers to ensure compliance with Ofsted regulations and suitable standards of quality. This includes the essential elements of support, challenge, development work, training and continuing professional development across all sectors.

- 3.8 Local eligibility criteria were developed in 2014 -15 to ensure that the most vulnerable children, who may not necessarily meet the income thresholds were also able to benefit from a funded early learning place. Examples of such groups include children with SEN and disabilities and those subject to Child Protection or Child in Need plans. Children meeting these criteria will need to continue to be funded from unspent trajectory funding, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the move to participation funding.
- 3.9 The Early Years DSG is currently forecast to be under-spent by £1,492,487, which constitutes the request for carry forward. Appendix A 'Carry Forward' gives an outline of planned spend in meeting statutory requirements.

#### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Not applicable.

#### **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 Appendix A shows the total remaining funding from 2014 -15 and the carry forward required to meet statutory duties.

#### **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

##### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal provisions are contained within the main body of this report.

##### Section 151 Officer – Strategic Director of Resources

- 6.2 The financial implications of the report are outlined in the supporting information.

##### Access Implications

- 6.3 There are no access implications.

#### **7 CONSULTATION**

##### Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 None.

Method of Consultation

7.2 Not applicable.

Representations Received

7.3 Not applicable.

Contact for further information

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