

	Schools Forum 20 June 2018
	Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People
Early Years Projects funded from allocated Dedicated Schools Grant reserves	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	For information
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide information around the planned use of reserves for Early Years projects from the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 1.2 This is providing an opportunity to make small development grants to providers across schools, PVI's and childminders based on the number of free entitlement (NEG 3 and 4) funded places they have provided in the 2017/2018 financial year.
- 1.3 In addition this enables two fixed term projects with long term outcomes and impact to be established.
- 1.4 The development grant has agreement from the Early Years Task and Finish Group.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Schools Forum is asked to:

Note and agree the plans for the allocation of the agreed reserves for Early Years.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The initial allocation of funds is for an Early Years development grant.

Providers are facing challenges related to how to support children with the highest level of developmental needs whilst ensuring their own business sustainability. Providers have indicated they would welcome additional support in this area. The government base rate for funding free entitlement hours is fixed and therefore the local rate cannot be altered. It is therefore proposed that a one off Early Years development grant be put in place for one year only to help with cost pressures faced by providers and allow time for renewed business sustainability to be explored. The grant will be calculated at 20p per hour for each NEG 3 and 4 free entitlement hour delivered by settings in the previous year. Subject to confirmation from the Schools Forum, this grant will be made available to all settings offering the free entitlement and guidance will be made available outlining any terms and conditions relating to the administration and spend of the grant

3.2 Project One: In Brent there is a lower than national average take-up rate of the early years' free entitlement and lower attainment levels by priority groups. This concern has led to the development of a 'Progress for all' early years project.

3.3 Brent's Early Help service was awarded a £50,000 grant from the 30 hours delivery support fund. Project one is currently being trialed between May 2018 and September 2018 through a pilot covering three ward areas and funded by this grant. The funding allocated by Schools Forum reserves will provide an opportunity to put in place more widespread, long term projects with clear measurable objectives aiming for sustained impact. It is generally acknowledged that improving the quality of early education provision and supporting assessment and planning will contribute to raising the attainment of target groups. Alongside work with settings, work will take place to support home learning and raise awareness of childcare options.

Some of the challenges that need to be addressed include:

- Creating more consistent quality of provision across the borough with a skilled workforce;
- Supporting greater business sustainability by enabling a greater number of free entitlement places;
- Increasing the take up of free entitlements for some 2 and all 3 and 4 year olds, which is currently below the national average at 59% and 80% respectively. Some wards have take-up of less than 50% of eligible children.
- Improving the attainment of priority groups including children of Black Caribbean, Somali and Irish Traveller heritage in order to improve their longer term educational outcomes. Boys of Black Caribbean heritage have

significantly lower levels of attainment and are over-represented within school exclusion, offending and looked after children cohorts.

- 3.4 The Progress for All project will build on and be informed by the work in the pilot. The issues highlighted will be tackled through a whole area approach exploring the strands of quality, access, employer engagement and home learning. Settings in each ward will be invited to participate with targeted support offered to those settings who meet the criteria of having high vacancy rates and low take up or those not currently offering 30 hour places.

The project will be implemented from September 2018 to December 2020 with an evaluation taking place at that time.

- 3.5 Stages to progress are:

- Continue to engage local multi-agency providers for pilot project
- Carry out pilot and evaluate
- Identify research partner

- 3.6 **Project Two:** The Home Office has identified Brent as one of 30 boroughs in England and Wales with a significant gang problem. Brent is committed to early identification of children and young people that are more vulnerable to gang involvement or exploitation and to give them the right support to prevent this happening. This has led to the exploration of an early years and primary age prevention programme that emphasises early identification and intervention. Further to the Brent Early Years conference in January 2018, where the issue of the role of superheroes in play was explored, settings have been keen to access support to equip practitioners in developing practice in this area. This has led to the development of project two, a 'superheroes' project.

- 3.7 This project is an early years and primary school prevention programme to build children's skills in self-regulation. The plan is to develop a superheroes based programme to assist with helping young children develop resilience and avoid risky situations. The expected outcome is that this will impact on the reduction of longer-term violence, as well as on relevant risk factors like aggression and conduct problems.

- 3.8 It is acknowledged that there are already some areas of good practice around these issues across Brent schools and early years settings. However due to the spread and complexity of associated issues in Brent, a greater focus on this work is being developed across all sectors.

- 3.9 There is a growing body of evidence about effective early intervention and the impact of this on children. Social and emotional skills are vitally important for children's life chances. This includes the ability to understand and manage emotions and to self-regulate behaviour.

- 3.10 A 2015 Home Office and Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) practice review (<http://www.eif.org.uk/publication/preventing-gang-and-youth-violence/>) makes clear that risk factors associated with gang involvement and youth violence can be identified

in young children. The earlier these signs are identified the greater the chance of good outcomes.

3.11 The key stages required in order to progress this project are:

- Development and implementation of a communications strategy including a competition to develop Brent's local superheroes;
- Visits to other local authorities involved in similar programmes with young children;
- Explore, map and learn from activity already being delivered across Brent early years and primary sectors;
- Work with an early years/primary school curriculum expert to develop a programme that meets the EIF criteria for effective universal programmes;
- Undertake this with key requirements for the programme to be accredited if it is decided to progress;
- Test the programme, evaluate and adapt the learning;
- Develop a Brent wide strategy for equipping the workforce to effectively implement the programme.

Sustainability of the project will be enabled by:

- Offering the programme free, including any resources, with the condition that schools allocate at least two members of staff to attend the trainer programme
- Developing and implementing a train the trainer programme

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The reserve amount allocated to Early Years by Schools Forum will cover part of the two projects and all the costs of the Development Grant.

Development Grant - £633,000

Project 1 'Progress for all' - the anticipated budget is £400k funded partly through DSG Early Years allocation from reserves and Early Years funding (£267,000 from DSG reserves and £133,000 from Early Years).

Project 2: 'Superheroes project' - the anticipated budget is £200k funded through DSG Early Years allocation from reserves and the rest from Early Years funding (£100,000 from each).

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 None.

6.0 Equality Implications

6.1 This is aimed at all children entitled, however there will be a focus on the most vulnerable children.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 N/A

8.0 TASK AND FINISH GROUP COMMENTS

8.1 This paper was discussed by the Early Years Task and Finish group on 6th June 2018. The development grant was fully supported.

Project one was discussed and seen to be valuable in carrying out an in-depth investigation into many issues impacting the sector at present. This project was supported.

Project two was also supported but it was requested that the Local Authority more explicitly show that some good work is already in progress across some schools and early years settings. It was confirmed that the project will map current provision and build on local expertise. There was some concern expressed about the planned timetable being unrealistic and it was therefore agreed that this would be revised.

Report sign off:

Gail Tolley

Strategic Director of Children and Young People