



**Schools Forum**  
6 November 2019

**Report from the Strategic Director  
of Children and Young People**

**Early Years Task and Finish Group Update**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	N/A
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	Prior financial reports to Schools Forum.
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Sue Gates - Head of Early Help, 020 8937 2710 Dena Aly - Senior Finance Analyst, 020 8937 2710

**1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Schools Forum on the work of the Early Years Task and Finish Group

**2. Recommendation**

2.1 Schools Forum is asked to note this report.

**3. Summary**

3.1 In January 2019, Schools Forum recommended that the Early Years Task and Finish Group reconvene with the following aims:

- to provide a steer on the way Early Years funding could be used by the Local Authority
- to review the actions that had been taken to increase the 30 hour take up
- to consider the impact of a potential reduction of the maximum percentage for central spend.

3.2 The Early Years Task and Finish Group last met on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019. This report provides a summary of the points discussed and agreed actions.

#### **4. Discussion on 5% Centrally Retained Budget**

4.1 The group discussed the 5% centrally retained budget, which is the equivalent of approximately £1.1m in 2018/19. Officers gave a brief presentation on the impact of centrally retained funding.

4.2 Discussions were held on the option for a 0% retention, where providers would need to source their own support. However, members of the group acknowledged the impact of the support services on OFSTED ratings, provision for SEND children and that the support from Brent Council is good and that quality of nursery provision could be impacted if this were not in place.

4.3 It was acknowledged that comprehensive information has been provided on how the centrally retained funding has been used at Brent, but officers discussed the importance of benchmarking with other local authorities. This is to include the minority of local authorities who retain little or no central funding in order to compare the levels of support delivered to providers. The benchmarking exercise would need to consider the trading offer and outcomes as well as OFSTED information.

4.4 The following actions were agreed:

4.4.1 London Councils to be contacted for information around other Local Authorities funding retention, services and support offered and any recommended or best practice models

4.4.2 A benchmarking exercise is to be undertaken and reported back at the next meeting.

#### **5. Use of Schools Forum Reserves**

5.1 Of the £1m use of DSG Reserves agreed by Schools Forum, £600k has been utilised. This was to provide funding for the two Schools Forum Approved projects for raising attainment for boys of Black Caribbean heritage and strengthening school leadership and succession planning.

5.2 A discussion took place around the decision made by Schools Forum to reject the two Early Years projects in June.

5.3 The High Needs block pressures were also discussed and that if the DSG goes into deficit, the local authority would be expected to pay this from future DSG funding, and the recovery plan would span the whole of the DSG.

#### **6. Current 30 hours' take-up against potential unmet demand and overall take-up of early years' provision and 'Progress for All'**

6.1 Members of the group discussed the early years provision and the take-up of entitlements. They were discussed together due to the cross involvements of both topics.

6.2 Increasing take up of free entitlement remains a focus for officers, as percentages remained lower than the national average for NEG2 and NEG 3 and 4. The Early Years team are carrying out significant work around promoting all of the free entitlements.

6.3 Although many providers were struggling to provide the 30 hours entitlement at the current funding levels, other setting felt they had benefitted significantly from delivery of the free entitlements.

6.4 Concerns were raised about the increasing salary costs, which may result in primary schools reducing the hours of provision, or running during term time only. It was noted that the Childcare Works workshop was tailored at providers to look at the different options and support available.

6.5 It was agreed that the ward working approach adopted by the Early Years Team should continue as it allowed the team to engage with more families on a local level. This could also help with finding out why some families are not taking up their entitlements, including due to movements of residents, diverse communities, birth rates, benefit caps.

## **7. Early Years virtual SEND hub update**

7.1 It was established that the Early Years Virtual SEND Hubs was not duplicating the work of the NHS. They do not do assessments of individual children, but would provide training for practitioners and parents to upskill them in order to help meet their children's needs. The biggest increase in referrals relates to SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health).

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1. There are no financial implications for this report

## **9. Legal Implications**

9.1. There are no legal implications for this report.

## **10. Equality Implications**

10.1. Not applicable.

## **11. Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

11.1. Not applicable.

## **12. Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

12.1. Not applicable.

### **Report sign off:**

**Gail Tolley**

Strategic Director of Children and Young People