

14 January 2019**Agenda Item: 9**

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES

CHANGES TO THE STAFFING STRUCTURE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks approval to disestablish a 0.7 fte (full-time equivalent) Early Years Specialist Teacher (Teaching Terms and Conditions) post and 1 fte Early Years Business Sustainability Officer (Band A) post with effect from 31st March 2019.

Information and Advice

Background

2. In line with Department for Education (DfE) Statutory Guidance, local authorities are advised to sell support packages to the early years sector which includes training, bespoke support packages and events. The service has developed a traded service 'Training and Development Opportunities' (TADO), whereby early years settings assessed as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' are asked to purchase support packages which will be offered by existing staff or associates commissioned to lead particular pieces of work. Free support packages focusing on education and learning continue to be available for settings with poorer Ofsted judgements. All early years providers regardless of Ofsted judgements are charged to access local early years training and conferences.
3. In February 2018, the Early Childhood Services business case for the creation of an early years traded service was agreed as part of the Council's wider budget saving proposals. The income target in 2018/19 was £50,000, however only £10,000 was generated so a temporary post was disestablished to make this saving. Income targets are set at £75,000 in 2019/20 and £100,000 in 2020/21, and the income was due to offset Council staffing costs. As targets will not be achieved a service restructure is required to achieve the necessary savings.

Proposal

4. Nottinghamshire County Council currently employs 7 fte Early Years Specialist Teachers to provide advice, guidance and training for early years providers to ensure that childcare and early education provision is of a high standard and attainment is improved. Currently there is 1 fte teacher allocated for each district regardless of identified need. The service currently has 1.7 fte vacant Early Years Specialist Teachers posts.

5. The team also employs 1 fte Business Sustainability Officer at Band A, to support local early years providers with their financial and business planning. This post has a role in supporting local providers to sustain their provision by providing guidance regarding accountancy systems, marketing, financial management etc. The role also supports the compliance processes of the Council by auditing early years providers to ensure that funding for childcare is used for the purpose it was intended.
6. The financial pressures facing early years providers since the launch of the 30 hours childcare scheme for 3 and 4 year olds has been widely reported in national media. However the early years settings that have required support from the Business Sustainability Officer have been mostly small pre-schools who have been unwilling or unable to provide the full 30 hours childcare per week for eligible children, so parents are choosing to use alternative childcare where their child can access all of the childcare entitlements in one setting. Surprisingly, since the launch of the 30 hours in September 2018, requests for support from this role have not increased and there is no longer enough work to warrant the continuation of this full-time post. The Council has been informed by representatives from the sector that the larger nurseries are accessing support from their accountants, whilst others are accessing advice from national bodies of which they are members e.g. the Pre School Learning Alliance.
7. Work to develop business sustainability support packages as part of TADO have not been progressed with the exception of a business sustainability toolkit which is currently being developed. In a training needs assessment carried out last year, only six early years providers stated that they wanted to access business sustainability support despite concerns being raised by the early years sector in relation to funding and business sustainability. Their requests focused on management committees and trustees, staff supervision and appraisal, marketing, cash flows and how to save money. Work to support management committees, marketing and staffing is already addressed by 4 fte Early Years Advisors rather than the Business Sustainability Officer.
8. Moving forward, Early Childhood Services are developing an increasingly targeted service model for quality and attainment support, whereby early years providers that are assessed as 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement' are prioritised; as well as those settings who provide places for the most vulnerable children, which include children with Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND), Looked After Children, children known to social care, 2 year olds from low income groups, and children with English as an Additional Language.
9. Moving towards a targeted model which sells training and support, the Council no longer requires a 1 fte Early Years Specialist Teacher to be allocated in each district and as the service has a 0.7 fte vacancy, this is an ideal opportunity to adapt the service structure to meet the needs of the early years sector and the Council, and achieve savings targets.
10. This report seeks approval to disestablish a 0.7 fte Early Years Specialist Teacher post as dedicated district roles are no longer required, however a named teacher will be identified for each district. Instead, settings across Nottinghamshire will be targeted as described above, releasing capacity of the existing teachers to focus on target settings to improve attainment in addition to their contribution towards the TADO traded service.
11. The early years TADO traded service requires specialist contributions depending on the needs of the sector. In most cases teachers and advisors employed by the Council fulfil this role, however associates and external training facilitators are commissioned to lead on certain issues which cannot be internally resourced such as paediatric first aid and speech and language. The use of external facilitators and associates will continue as the traded

service progresses, offsetting costs through income generation and subsequently reducing demands placed on the Early Years Specialist Teachers employed by the Council.

12. This report also seeks approval to disestablish the 1 fte Early Years Business Sustainability Officer post. Instead, audits can be led by the existing 2.2 fte Early Years Technical Specialists whose role includes the requirement to ensure that funding for the delivery of funded early years provision complies with national and local financial regulations. In addition, activity to support accountancy and financial management will be included in the new Business Sustainability Toolkit. Where support packages are required, Early Childhood Services will commission e-learning and procure associates and external facilitators to deliver support packages on the Council's behalf, and these costs will be off-set through income generation. The creation of a Business Sustainability Toolkit is also being developed for local early years providers to refer to in the first instance.

Other Options Considered

13. Additional work has been taking place to increase income generated through the TADO, however capacity to give this traded service the attention it deserves has been limited. Taking part in the Commercial Development Unit was useful however the process did confirm that income generation targets were unrealistic and would not be achieved.
14. The service model has been adapted over previous years to ensure that new government initiatives are implemented whilst developing a targeted approach with early years settings, as well as the launch of the sold service through TADO. The service model has reduced functions and refreshed roles to ensure that the new and emerging needs of the sector are addressed.

Reason for Recommendation

15. As income targets for the TADO traded service will not be achieved in 2019/20 and 2020/21, Early Childhood Services are required to find savings elsewhere which ultimately has led to a service restructure.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

17. The Early Years Specialist Teacher (Teaching Terms and Conditions) posts are funded through the local authority revenue budget and this funding remains ring fenced for these posts.
18. The Early Years Business Sustainability Officer (Band A) post is funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The saving made will release DSG funding to offset other salaries currently funded by the local authority revenue budget.

19. Disestablishing the 0.7 fte Early Years Specialist Teacher post will save £39,397, and the 1 fte Business Sustainability Officer post will save £37,554, making an overall saving of £76,951 to contribute towards the overall savings included in the business case.

Human Resources Implications

20. If this proposal is approved, it will result in the deletion of the vacant 0.7 fte Early Years Specialist Teacher post.
21. If approved, the decision to disestablish the Early Years Business Sustainability Officer post will result in redundancy for the post holder unless they can be redeployed into another vacant post within the Council. The post holder will be supported by his line manager to find alternative employment if the post is disestablished.
22. Consultation meetings have been held with the post holder affected. The Early Childhood Services team held a workshop on 27th November 2018 to discuss proposals so they are informed of plans to achieve budget savings targets from 1st April 2019.

Implications for Service Users

23. By making these staffing reductions, children will still be able to access their free childcare entitlements which enable parents to work and to help children achieve a good level of development and be ready for school.
24. Increasing numbers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds will be monitored and supported in early years settings through the new targeted service model. The targeted model allocates capacity from Specialist Early Years Teachers who now prioritise early years settings with higher numbers of vulnerable children. This will help close the attainment gap between children eligible for free school meals and their peers.
25. A greater number of early years providers judged as 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement' will have access to intensive support packages led by Early Years Specialist Teachers and Advisors who will no longer offer free support to settings judged as 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. This will help to increase the number of high quality early years settings which subsequently support children's development and improve social mobility.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That the disestablishment of a 0.7 fte Early Years Specialist Teacher (Teaching Terms and Conditions) post and 1 fte Early Years Business Sustainability Officer (Band A) post from the Early Childhood Services staffing structure with effect from 31st March 2019 be approved.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 03/01/19)

26. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 03/01/19)

27. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraphs 17 to 19 above.

HR Comments (BC 03/01/19)

28. The staffing implications are contained within the body of this report. Staff have been consulted on the proposed changes. Any redundancy arising from the proposal will be dealt with in accordance with the Authority's agreed redeployment procedure.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Early Childhood Services structure chart.

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.

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