

Report to Schools' Forum re Membership of CLEAPSS

Background

As you are aware, Walsall Council is a member¹ of CLEAPSS (the schools' science and technology advisory service), and subscribe to its service each year on behalf of the schools in the Borough.

CLEAPSS advice and documentation is recognised by the Health & Safety Executive and the Department for Education as the definitive basis for safe practice in practical work in science, and design and technology, in schools and colleges. Membership of CLEAPSS is also a very cost effective way of getting expert advice on all aspects of science and technology – it's not just about health & safety.

Historically, membership of CLEAPSS was paid for through the DSG Licence budget; however in 2016/17 schools chose not to de-delegate this budget; hence there was no longer a central budget from which to pay for membership.

As a one-off, 2017/18's membership of CLEAPSS was paid for from the health & safety team's training budget (at a cost of £3865); however, the team is not responsible for membership of CLEAPSS and has no budget to pay for it going forwards. Consequently, other arrangements will need to be put in place if Walsall schools are to remain members of CLEAPSS.

Options

The most cost effective model of CLEAPSS membership is where the council joins on behalf of Walsall schools; in this scenario, membership costs 12.5p for each pupil age 5 – 19². Schools can join CLEAPSS independently; however, in this scenario, schools pay either 20p per pupil (primary) or 26p per pupil (secondary)³

If schools wish to remain members of CLEAPSS, there appear to be three options:

1. Schools join independently
2. The council pays for membership and recharges each school on a pro rata basis, based on the total number of pupils aged 5 – 19 in each school
3. The council joins on behalf of schools, but membership is paid for from a budget controlled by schools' forum

¹ Almost all local authorities responsible for education in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, are members. In the absence of membership, employers (be it the council, governors, or trustees) would have to show how they ensured health & safety in science, design and technology and art.

² 2017/18 prices

³ There is also an additional charge of £40 for each secondary school that uses CLEAPSS Radiation Protection Advisor service.

- Option 1 is the least cost effective for schools, and risks piecemeal membership as some schools may choose not to be members.
- Option 2 appears more cost effective; however, the overall cost to the council of paying the invoice and then recharging each school (£20 – £60 per primary school) makes this uneconomic due to the on-costs associated with administration and raising invoices. In addition, some schools may choose not to be members of CLEAPSS, which would further complicate the process.
- Option 3 is the most cost effective from both a membership and administrative perspective; however this option requires agreement from schools to use a schools' forum budget.

So is it worth it?

Whilst the majority of CLEAPSS guidance is aimed at secondary schools, they also produce a wealth of information for primaries, and CLEAPSS are aiming to make their resources more accessible and useful for primary schools. The charge per primary school is also very modest, typically £20 to £60 per year.

With regard to secondary schools, whilst membership of CLEAPSS is not compulsory, in the opinion of the health & safety team schools would struggle to find the same level of advice and guidance on safe practice in science and technology either internally or from any other external organisation; therefore the team would strongly recommend that secondary schools remain members of CLEAPSS.

We believe that CLEAPSS is a valuable service for all schools and the charge per pupil is very modest.

With regard to secondary schools, the health & safety team believe that membership of CLEAPSS is essential to ensure safety in practical work and there is a risk in them not being members⁴.

Recommendation

That Walsall schools remain members of CLEAPSS and make use of Option 3 to secure future funding.

Chris Close
Health & Safety Manager
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⁴ In the absence of corporate membership, the health & safety team would seek reassurances during H&S audits that the school has joined CLEAPSS independently and also had arrangements in place for radiation protection; however, it should be noted that all secondary schools in Walsall are academies, voluntary aided or foundation schools, hence the council is not the employer and health & safety and the H&S audit service is only provided on a traded basis.