



Walsall Children's Services

Report to: Schools Forum

Date: 19 January 2010

Subject: Early Years Funding Reforms – Pathfinder Status

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Purpose of the report: To inform the Schools Forum of the DCSF policy change regarding the implementation of the Early Years Funding Reforms.

Recommendations: To support the local authority's application for Early Years Pathfinder Status with effect from 1st April 2010

1. Introduction

- 1.1** On the 10th December 2009 Dawn Primarolo, Minister for Children, Young People and Families, announced that the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula was to be postponed for one year, to April 2011.
- 1.2** The reason for the postponement was that over two thirds of local authorities had not made sufficient progress in the development of their Early Years Single Funding Formula, to support its implementation with effect from 1st April 2010. However, DCSF are encouraging those local authorities that are ready to implement the funding reforms this year, to continue as planned, by joining a new wave of pathfinders for 2010-11.
- 1.3** Walsall was one of the third of authorities that were ready to implement the changes from 1 April 2010. GOWM has been complimentary about the work that has been done in Walsall.

2. Early Years Single Funding Formula Wave 2 Pathfinders

- 2.1** In a letter dated 18th December 2009, the DCSF invited applications from local authorities to become second wave pathfinders for the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula. The closing date for applications is the 29th January 2010, and local authorities will be notified of the outcome by 15th February 2010.
- 2.2** Second wave pathfinders will be expected to work with the DCSF and the existing pilot authorities to help simplify the process for others and share good practice to support local authorities that have yet to implement the formula and/ or are experiencing difficulties.
- 2.3** Walsall has been working towards the early years funding reforms for a number of years, with the phasing out of planned places and the move to participation-led funding. Therefore, the main change for Walsall maintained nursery providers is the introduction of the hourly rate and the termly count. A number of local authorities experiencing difficulties are moving directly from fixed place-led funding to full, termly participation-led funding.
- 2.4** The Minister has confirmed that the government remains strongly committed to the introduction of the Early Years Single Funding Formula in all areas from April 2011, and that the delay is to allow those local authorities not yet ready to implement additional time to work through the problems.
- 2.5** Walsall local authority is one of the authorities that has successfully developed and consulted upon an Early Years Single Funding Formula. At the last meeting of the Schools Forum, 8th December 2009, the new formula was supported and Cabinet are due to consider the funding proposals at its next meeting on 13th January 2010.
- 2.6** The purpose of the introduction of an Early Years Single Funding Formula is to ensure that every early years pupil in the borough is funded in a fair and equitable manner. The purpose is not to fossilise funding arrangements for individual schools or providers. However, it is recognised that for Walsall nursery schools there will be a change in funding levels, and as such transitional funding arrangements have been agreed to help the schools manage the process.
- 2.7** To support the principle of funding all early years pupils in a fair and equitable manner, it is recommended that Walsall applies to become an Early Years Funding Reforms second wave pilot authority.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1** The Schools Forum is formally requested to support the local authority proposal to apply for second wave pathfinder status in respect of the Early Years Funding Reforms.