

Report of the Director of Children and Families

Report to the Leeds Schools Forum

Date: January 2021

Subject: Early Years Action Plan

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Summary of main issues

1. For 20/21 Leeds City Council retained £35,000 of the funding provided for 3 and 4 year olds. This report sets out information on how that funding is being spent on the Early Years Improvement and Engagement programme. This is not the full extent of the Early Years actions and is only a summary of those areas where the additional funding has been targeted.

Recommendations

2. Schools Forum is asked to note the information on the Improvement and Engagement programme.

1 Context of the programme

1.1 The programme was designed to better engage early years PVI settings with the local authority early years improvement team. Many settings do not attend training, briefings or request consultant visits and often only engage when there is a crisis or when they have received an RI or Inadequate Ofsted judgement. This programme aims to work proactively with early years settings and engage with them in an ongoing self-evaluation and improvement journey.

1.2 The programme consists of a suite of free training to support Communication and Language, Literacy and Maths. The training takes place over the period of a year and aims to build and develop the knowledge and skills of practitioners within the early years settings.

1.3 In addition to this, 20 targeted settings were invited to take part in the training programme alongside receiving bespoke consultant support for the leadership team throughout the year. These settings were selected carefully, and criteria included a previous RI or Inadequate Ofsted judgement, high numbers of disadvantaged children, lack of engagement, leadership changes etc.

2 Aims of the programme

- To engage PVI settings with a programme of training throughout the year.
- To develop better working relationships with previously hard to engage settings.
- To develop practitioners' knowledge in Communication and Language, Literacy and Maths and how to support children's learning in these areas.
- To develop leadership capacity and expertise.

3. Progress so far

3.1 Initial recruitment of the targeted settings took place and although a long term commitment was an expectation, many settings were very positive and enthusiastic about being part of the programme.

3.2 Training and support visits were originally planned to begin from April 2020 onwards but were put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic and so began in October 2020.

3.3 The pandemic has had a significant impact on staffing and capacity in early years settings and this has made it difficult for settings to attend training sessions and engage in leadership meetings with consultants.

4 Cost Implications

Consultant time to develop training packages and adapt for online delivery:

Communication and Language – 3 training sessions £1,500

Literacy – 3 training sessions £1, 500

Maths – 3 training sessions £1,500 = £4,500

Development of support materials, audits, resources - £2,000

Online meetings/consultations with leadership teams in all targeted settings - £5,000

Delivery of online training sessions in autumn term - £4,000

Children's centre teacher time planning/prep - £600

Total costs so far: £16,100

Projected costs for spring and summer term

Online meetings/consultations with leadership teams in all targeted settings - £5,000 x 2

Delivery of online training sessions in autumn term - £4,000 x 2

Children's centre teacher time £2,000

Total projected costs for spring and summer £20,000

Total projected cost for autumn, spring and summer work £36,100

5 Delivery and Engagement

5.1 Targeted Settings

18 of the targeted settings have continued to engage in the programme. Many leaders in these settings have prioritised attending training sessions alongside their practitioners which has enhanced the professional development opportunities.

Bespoke leadership sessions with consultants have been very successful in identifying where settings are in their improvement journey and supporting leaders to decide on their priorities

moving forward. All settings now have an action plan which their consultant will support them with over the coming year.

5.2 Training Programme

3 Communication and Language sessions delivered

3 Literacy sessions delivered

3 Maths sessions delivered

150 practitioners attended training sessions

100% of evaluations were good or excellent and all said the training would impact on their future practice.

Evaluation comments highlighted:

- knowledge and enthusiasm of the trainers
- quality of presentation of the course
- practitioners had increased confidence in teaching methods
- good pace of the training
- excellent content

5.3 Moving forward

Training sessions and bespoke consultant sessions are booked in for the new year. We hope that the Covid-19 situation will begin to improve in the spring term. We know that this could impact on the engagement of settings moving forward and reduce their capacity for improvement work with their staff teams.

Consultants remain committed to delivering the programme and realise the need for this training and support more than ever, particularly in areas of disadvantage. However they are sensitive to the needs of settings at this time and are aware of the need for flexibility and additional support to enable them to maintain engagement.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Schools Forum is asked to note the information on the Improvement and Engagement programme.