

TITLE	Matters Arising Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 14 July 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This reports forms part of regular reporting to Schools Forum, informing areas of statutory decision making and improving visibility and consultation on wider Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial matters.

RECOMMENDATION

Schools Forum are asked to note the update on matters arising.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report provides Schools Forum with an update on the following matters arising:

- Insurance Arrangements for Maintained Schools
- 2021/22 Early Years Funding
- De-delegated Review
- High Needs Block Training

Update for Matters Arising July 2021

1. Insurance Arrangements for Maintained Schools

Following the removal of insurance from de-delegation arrangements, and the introduction of a revised charging methodology for the 2021/22 financial year, of the 35 maintained schools:

- 18 went for the RPA
- 17 stayed with WBC

Of the 17 who chose to stay with the Council, 5 have signed up for the 2 year deal which was offered to fix prices until the end of the Council's current insurance contract.

Consultation will be undertaken with schools prior to the retender to inform the new contract but based on the indicated level of interest from schools, it is unlikely that the Council will continue to offer to maintained schools beyond the current contract which ends in the summer of 2023.

2. 2021/22 Early Years Funding

The ESFA's usual approach to determining EY funding allocations for LAs is based on an annual census count of the number of hours taken up by children in each local authority in January.

Given the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on childcare attendance levels and that the January 2021 census data may have been lower than normal, a different approach to funding was needed for 2021/22. The ESFA are therefore funding all LAs on a termly basis in 2021/22, based on actual attendance each term.

The ESFA announced their intention to fund local authorities for the 2021 spring term using the January 2021 census. If attendance rises after the census is taken, they said they will top-up local authorities' attendance figures, up to 85% of their January 2020 census level, where a local authority can provide evidence of increased attendance during the Spring term.

To deliver this policy they will use the summer term attendance data count. Since the summer term data count will naturally be higher than the attendance reached by the end of the spring term (as additional children become eligible for the entitlements for the first time), they aim to fund local authorities based on a reasonable 'mid-point' attendance level for the term.

They will do this by using an average of the January 2021 census and the summer term 2021 count. That is, they will use the January 2021 count to represent attendance for the first half of Spring term, and the Summer 2021 count to represent the latter half and recognise the increase in attendance to determine the final spring term top up. This will be done for each of the early years entitlements to represent Spring term attendance.

This means that the usual adjustment the LA receives in July for the previous financial year, will not be advised until November 2021, and only at that point can the LA then undertake a final reconciliation against the Early Years Provider Fund (previously known as Early Years Contingency). This means that any balance available to pass on to provider will not be known much later than in previous years, and final figures will not be reported to Schools Forum until December / January.

3. **De-delegated Review**

Following agreement to undertake a review of all de-delegated services for 2022/23 budget setting all maintained schools were asked to express an interest in being part of the group. Volunteers from Emmbrook Infants, Woodley Primary and Hawthorns Primary have come forward and will form a small task & finish group to review options and form recommendations back to schools.

An initial kick-off meeting had been planned for mid June, however timeline has been pushed back due to LA capacity constraints. Review will still be undertaken within required timeframe to ensure an informed approach can be taken for the 2022/23 financial year.

4. **High Needs Block Training**

At the March meeting of Forum we agreed to design some awareness training to support Forum members on their understanding of the High Needs Block. Interest has also been shown in attending such sessions from Council colleagues. Content is in development with the aim to have this rolled out from September, delivered over Teams, with a variety of dates available to allow as many people as possible to attend.

Should Forum members prefer a dedicated session at that time then arrangements can be made.

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