

# CABINET

<b>DATE</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Councillor Margaret Cracknell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Ann-Marie Matson, Director of Children's Services
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Approval and Acceptance of the Department for Education Wraparound Childcare Programme Funding
<b>STATUS</b>	Open
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF NO.</b>	CB 01/24/03

## CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The recommendations in this report will contribute to the achievement of the Strategic Aims set out in the adopted Council Plan, particularly the vision of Stronger Economy; Stronger Communities, by enhancing the wraparound childcare offer for primary-aged children across the borough. This will provide parents with a greater choice of childcare provision in school term time, with extended paid-for childcare hours.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the government's new National Wraparound Childcare Programme, and seeks Cabinet's approval and acceptance of the ring-fenced Department for Education (DfE) Wraparound Childcare Programme (WCP) funding in order for North East Lincolnshire Council to co-ordinate the delivery of the Wraparound Childcare Programme across the borough.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approves and delegates authority to the Executive Director Place and Resources (as s151 Officer) to accept the ring-fenced Wraparound Childcare Programme funding of up to £1,055,568.55, paid in instalments of: £12,559.27 in 2023/24; £708,952.09 in 2024/25, with a final, provisional payment of £334,057.19 in 2025/26;
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education to implement and co-ordinate the delivery of the Wraparound Childcare Programme in North East Lincolnshire, making modifications as and when necessary.

## REASONS FOR DECISION

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training

for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). Acceptance of the Wraparound Childcare Programme funding will enable the Local Authority to co-ordinate the local response to the reforms to childcare that were announced in the Government's Spring 2023 budget.

## **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

- 1.1 In the government's Spring 2023 budget, the Chancellor announced transformative reforms to childcare for parents with £289m of additional funding to enhance and extend provision. One of the main programmes within the announcement was for wraparound paid-for childcare for primary-aged children from 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday, during term time. The new offer will empower parents, allowing them to progress their careers and support their families.
- 1.2 Nationally, parents face challenges in securing childcare once their children start primary school as the school day starts later and ends earlier than early years childcare settings. Parents might have to change their working patterns, change their job or even stop working altogether if they can't find suitable childcare before and/ or after the school day. This inevitably impacts families, the community and the economy.
- 1.3 From September 2024, the new national wraparound childcare offer will be rolled out, with all primary schools expected to offer this provision by September 2026, either alone or in partnership with other providers.
- 1.4 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare for children of working parents up to age 14 (18 for disabled children). As such, the Local Authority will utilise the WCP funding to co-ordinate the expansion of wraparound childcare in line with this duty.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2.1 The Local Authority will receive up to £1,055,568.55 to support the start-up, expansion and running costs of provision, including costs for staffing, training, and resources, while demand for provision builds. The expectation is that provision will become self-sustainable through parental payments alone by the end of the funding term.
- 2.2 The expectation that every school will have a wraparound childcare offer by September 2026, provided either by themselves or in partnership with another provider, will require significant support if the WCP is to succeed.

## **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

No other options have been considered due to the statutory duty for childcare sufficiency.

## **4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1. There are potential positive implications for the Council resulting from the decision to accept the WCP funding. With the right support to enable schools

to develop wraparound childcare, families will be able to access childcare that meets their needs during term time.

- 4.2. An action plan will be agreed with the Council's communications service, covering any statutory communication, consultation and/or information requirements.

## **5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1. Start-up funding for delivery of the WCP is provided by central government in the form of ring-fenced grant payments totalling up to £1,055,568.55 to cover the next two financial years so there will be no call on Council reserves.
- 5.2. Ensuring sufficient wraparound childcare places are available to all who need them, will have a positive impact on the local area. This will include:
  - supporting the local childcare market to become more robust;
  - ensuring quality, consistent, reliable childcare places are available to working families;
  - enabling and supporting employment opportunities for parents returning to work; and
  - supporting the local economy to grow.

## **6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

Primary-aged children will be impacted positively by the WCP as they will have safe and engaging childcare provision between the hours of 8 am and 6 pm in an environment they know well. It is expected that, for the majority of children who use this service, they will not have to leave their education setting to attend wraparound childcare.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no climate change and environmental implications.

## **8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY**

A report on the local response to the WCP will be presented to the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The WCP will be fully funded through external grant funding, with no requirement for contributions from core Council budget.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. Immediate legal implications arising will be around the terms and conditions of external grant funding and the completion of any requisite funding agreements and ancillary documentation. Legal Services will support this process, ensuring the interests of the Council are protected.
- 10.2. The delegations sought are appropriate to an exercise of this nature.

**11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct HR implications.

**12. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

All wards are affected by this decision.

**13. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

National Wraparound Childcare Programme Guidance for Local Authorities  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wraparound-childcare-guidance-for-local-authorities>

**14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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**COUNCILLOR MARGARET CRACKNELL**

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION**