**SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING – 17th SEPTEMBER 2014**

**DSG – Request for Funding**

**Introduction**

The following information provides details regarding the request for funding to be allocated to North East Lincolnshire Council Children’s Centres as follows:

* £250,000 per annum for the next 2 years
* Funding will be used to part fund the work of 22 whole time equivalent Community Play Development Workers (CPDW)which currently costs £450,000 in salaries
* Prior to the end of the funding period an evaluation will be carried out to measure the impact of the work carried out by the CPDW and the effectiveness of closer, targeted work undertaken in partnership with schools. A report will be produced for the Schools Forum with options for the future.

**Background**

There are currently 10 Children’s Centres across North East Lincolnshire whose core purpose is “to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in in the greatest need and their peers in:

* Child development and school readiness;
* Parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and
* Child and family health and life chances.”

The early years are critically important for creating ‘solid psychological and neurological foundations to optimise lifelong social, emotional and physical health, and educational and economic achievement’(Wave Trust 2013). Several government reviews have reinforced the importance of early intervention and supporting families in the foundation years, and have set out a strong economic case for investing in the early years to improve outcomes for children in later life.

Children’s centres play a key role in prevention and early intervention in addition they are a vital source of support for young children and their families, particularly the most disadvantaged. They offer a range of activities, family services and advice, to promote school readiness, improve family outcomes and reduce inequalities in child health and development, and are highly valued by communities.

Centres across the authority employ a variety of staff, including 22 whole time equivalent Community Play Development Workers(CPDW). These workers currently deliver a variety of universal play activities, packages of one to one work with families to improve speech and language development or behaviour issues. Children’s Centres have a high proportion (93.5%) of children under 5 registered to access services and support with 90.7% of these children accessing support in the last year.

Since 2010 Sure Start Children’s Centres have been subject to Ofsted inspection. When making their judgments on the effectiveness of the setting they must consider:

* The quality and impact of services in improving the readiness of target children for school
* Improved parenting and opportunities for target adults to participate in activities that improve their personal skills, education and employability
* The effectiveness of partnerships with key agencies
* The extent to which centres provide effective services to those families most in need of help and support

Only one out of the ten centres has yet to be inspected, six have been judged outstanding and three were judged good. The impact of outcomes for children and their families takes many years to manifest but centres have been able to demonstrate success in terms of:

* Outputs such as numbers of families reached and engaged
* Case files that track and demonstrate the improvements made by individual families
* Soft outcome data, such as whether a parent feels they or their child have benefited from a service

The most recent Ofsted inspection at Immingham Children’s Centre noted “Children who attend the centre’s activities make very good progress in most areas of their development and are prepared well for school.”

**DSG Use of Funding**

The focus of the project will be on the impact of Prevention and Early Intervention work carried out by CPDW’s working with their link school.

There is considerable evidence indicating early intervention is cost effective and when delivered in a timely and effective way, will help transform the lives of vulnerable young people, families and communities. It is an important investment because ‘later interventions are considerably less effective if they have not had good foundations’. (The Marmot Review : Fair Society, Health Lives 2010)

In April 2015 , the model of delivery of Children’s Centre services will undergo transformation as they move to become Family Centres, serving families with children aged 0-14 years. In response to further government cuts to local authorities our service needs make a saving of £1 million which puts the Community Play Development Workers posts at risk. Therefore, we are seeking joint funding to allow their good work to continue and to develop further. This project will support centres to work with schools to ensure they are making the most of opportunities and resources, to ensure children, young people and their families have the best chances to succeed.

Early Intervention offers our country a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of our children: to forestall many persistent social problems, and end their transmission from one generation to the next, and to make long term savings in public spending. Allen (2011)

Effective early intervention can transform lives – helping parents back into work, stabilising children at school and removing the barriers to living healthy and productive lives.

Community Play Development Workers will re-focus the work they undertake and focus on delivering transition programmes in school setting, packages of targeted work in schools with pupils identified as at risk of not achieving their Early learning Goals at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and also work 1:1 with families identified by the schools as needing additional support to encourage parental participation in their child’s learning. This 1:1 work will take place in the family home and continue to be provided out of school and term time in the family home or Family Centre.

Under this project each school will be allocated a named Community Play Development The number of hours allocated to each school. The basis of allocation will be determined based on a measurement of need such as prior attainment or deprivation. Should this be approved Schools Forum will be advised of the precise measure.

Line management, training and development of the staff will remain with Children’s Centres. They will continue to deliver small numbers of universal activities in the centres in order to identify those children at risk of not achieving Early Learning Goals at the earliest opportunity so they can engage parents in the child’s learning, complete any early intervention to reduce such risks and sign post to any additional means of support.

**Outcomes**

1. **Raising Attendance Levels:**

Young children don't play truant from school, they are off because their parents allow it, this non- attendance in the early years soon becomes a pattern and establishes poor attitudes towards school. The Community Play Development Workers will deliver transition programmes that stress the importance of attendance, not only in the foundation stage but also in the years to come, so parents understand the contribution they make to their child's wellbeing, achievement and attendance. Persistent poor attendance in the foundation will be followed up by staff with home visits, although attendance is not compulsory at this stage many schools do not take measures to improve attendance until pupils reach statutory age but for some children this is already too late.

1. **Raising Attainment:**

There is overwhelming evidence that children’s life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life. It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development in those crucial years that together matter more to children than money, in determining whether their potential is realised in adult life. Field, F. (December 2010)

Therefore, it is essential that the Community Play Development Workers work holistically with families that are identified in Foundation Stage 1 and 2 as being at risk of not achieving the excepted level of development against the Early Learning Goals. Not only will they work in the setting with some groups of targeted children, they will carry on this work outside the school in the family home with the parents to increase their participation in home learning.

The Community Play Development Workers will focus on the following essential outcomes in relation to children’s cognitive, communication and language, social and emotional development:

* All children are developing age appropriate skills in drawing and copying
* Children increase the level to which they pay attention during activities and to people around them
* Children are developing age appropriate comprehension of spoken and written language
* Children are building age appropriate use of spoken and written language
* Children are engaging in age appropriate play
* Children have age appropriate self-management and self-control

They will also focus on outcomes associated with parenting and child development in relation to:

* Parents regularly talking to their child using a wide range of words and sentence structures, including songs, poems and rhymes.
* More parents reading to their child every day.
* More parents regularly engaging positively with their child
* Improved parental responsiveness and secure parent-child attachment
1. **Improving Behaviour**

Parenting that surrounds children and the context in which that parenting takes place have been found to be the best predictors of outcomes for children. Therefore, to truly improve outcomes for children, it is essential that the Community Play Development Workers are mindful of the ‘building blocks’ of children’s health and development. The interaction between parent and child, the home communication and learning environment are crucial on later outcomes for children and Community Play Development Workers can work with individual families in the family home to improve issues around behaviour, providing parents with effective and evidence bases strategies. They are also able to refer on to more intensive programmes of support through the Children’s Centre if required. Outcomes around behaviour will be considered in terms of:

* Improved parental responsiveness and secure parent-child attachment
* More parents setting and reinforcing boundaries
* More parents are increasing their knowledge and application of good parenting

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