

Dear All,

SCHOOLS' FORUM - THURSDAY, 29TH FEBRUARY, 2024

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Thursday, 29th February, 2024 meeting of the Schools' Forum, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item

9 **Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block 2024 - 2025 (Pages 1 - 6)**

[To agree the proposed use of the Early Years Block grant for 2024-2025.]

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City of Wolverhampton Council

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Date	29 February 2024
Report title	Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block 2024-2025
Contact Officer	Peter Green, Finance Manager
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Summary

This report provides details of the proposed use of the Early Years funding block of the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2024-2025

Decisions

Members of Schools' Forum are asked to:

- Agree to the proposed use of the Early Years Block grant for 2024-2025

Schedule of background papers

- [Schools operational guide 2024 to 2025 - December 2023](#)
- [Schools and Early Years Finance \(England\) Regulations 2023](#)
- [Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational Guide 2024-2025](#)
- [Dedicated Schools Grant allocation tables: 2024 to 2025 \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Early years funding extension of entitlements: government consultation response](#)
- [Early years funding rates and step-by-step calculations 2024 to 2025 \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Department for Education (DfE) introduced a National Funding Formula for Early Years (EYNFF) in 2017, and Schools' Forum agreed to wholly adopt the formula from its onset. Over summer 2023 the government consulted on proposals to ensure the funding system supports the delivery of the new working parent entitlements for children aged nine months up and including two years old from 2024. The main changes are:
- introduction of a new national funding formula (NFF) covering both the existing two-year-old entitlement for disadvantaged children and new working parent entitlements to be introduced in 2024 to 2025 for two-year-olds and children aged nine months to two years;
 - extending the 95% pass-through requirement to the disadvantaged two-year-old entitlement and the new working parent entitlements
 - extending local funding rules to the disadvantaged two-year-old entitlement and the new working parent entitlements;
 - a requirement for local authorities to have a disadvantaged two-year-old rate that is at least equal to their rate for two-year-old children of working parents;
 - new deprivation supplement arrangements for the disadvantaged two-year-old entitlement and the new working parent entitlements
 - confirming the expectation that local authorities have special educational needs inclusion funds (SENIFs) for all children with special educational needs (SEN) eligible for or taking up the new and existing entitlements, regardless of the number of hours taken;
 - extending eligibility for EYPP and DAF to eligible children aged two years old and under accessing the entitlements from 2024 to 2025 and increases to the value of both funding streams.
- 1.2 The Early Years block grant paid to the Council is mainly based on hourly rates from the EYNFF, and the initial Early Years Block grant for 2023-2024 was £20.0 million. In July 2023 the government announced a new early years supplementary grant (EYSG) from September 2023 for the financial year 2023 to 2024. The Wolverhampton allocation was £1.1 million.
- 1.3 In July 2023 the government announced support for early years with increased teacher workforce costs from 1 September 2023, covering the period September 2023 to March 2024. The value of the Early Years Teachers Pay Additional Grant (EY TPAG) was £135,983. Both the (EYSG) and (EY TPAG) grants are incorporated into local authorities' core funding arrangements through the Early Years funding block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) from 2024-2025, meaning that settings will not receive these separate grants in 2024-2025.

- 1.4 The indicative allocation for 2024-2025 is shown in the table below. The new working parent entitlements for children aged nine months up to and including two-year-olds is detailed, including the extended eligibility for Early Years Pupil Premium and Disability Access Fund entitlement to children aged two and under.

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT	2024-2025	2023-2024
EARLY YEARS' BLOCK	allocations	allocations
	(indicative)	(indicative)
	£million	£million
Universal entitlement for 3- & 4-year-olds	13.3	12.2
Additional 15 hours for eligible 3- & 4-year-olds	3.6	3.1
2-year-old disadvantaged entitlement	4.3	3.0
2-year-old entitlement for working parents - NEW	3.2	
Under 2s entitlement - NEW	2.2	
Early Years Pupil Premium for 3- & 4-year-olds	0.4	0.4
Early Years Pupil Premium for 2-year-olds & under - NEW	0.2	
Disability Access Fund for 3- & 4-year-olds, includes 2 years olds & under - NEW	0.2	0.1
Maintained Nursery School Supplementary Funding	1.2	1.2
Total Early Years Block indicative allocation	28.6	20.0

2.0 Proposals for 2024-2025 hourly rates

- 2.1 The initial EYNFF paid to the Council for three- and four-year-old funding will be £5.74 for 2024-2025 (this was £5.50 in 2023-2024 allowing for the part-year supplementary grant increase from September 2023). The document 'Early years funding rates and step-by-step calculations 2024 to 2025' published by the ESFA shows how this rate is calculated.
- 2.2 Adjustments to this rate are made on an annual basis as shown in the table below, and the proposal is to maintain the existing adjustments for Special Education Needs (SEN) and Deprivation Supplement funding at the same level as in 2023-2024. It is proposed to increase the centrally retained funding element from 0.04p to 0.17p per hour, this will support the costs of the Early Years service and means 3% overall centrally retained funding compared to the maximum 5%. In 2023-2024 an element of 0.15p per hour relating to Pay and Pension costs at school nurseries was top-sliced however it is proposed that this will be built into the universal three- and four-year-old rate for 2024-2025. It is proposed the three- and four-year-old rate of £5.74 is utilised as below:

3- & 4-Year-Old Funding	2024-2025	2023-2024
	Hourly	Hourly
	Rate (£)	Rate (£)
Local Authority Settlement	5.74	5.19
Separate Teachers Pay and Pension element for School nurseries	0.00	0.15
Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund Top Up Grant	0.09	0.09
Deprivation Supplement Funding	0.35	0.35
Centrally Retained Funding	0.17	0.04
Universal hourly rate for all settings	5.13	4.56

2.3 The Wolverhampton hourly rate for both disadvantaged two-year-olds and two-year-olds with working parents will be £8.24 in 2024-2025 which is an increase from 2023-2024 rate of £5.67. The two-year-old hourly rate has previously been passed through in full to settings as per the guidance. From 2024-2025 the current framework of rules for the distribution of entitlements funded by local authorities for three- and four-year-olds has been extended to the two-year rates and new under two rates. As a result, up to 5% of the hourly rate can be retained centrally. There are no proposed changes to the adjustments for deprivation or SENIF grants. The proposed rate ensures the funding rate paid for the two-year-olds disadvantaged entitlement is at least equivalent to the rate for the two-year-old working parent entitlement.

2.4 It is proposed the two-year-old rate of £8.24 is utilised as below:

	2024-2025	2023-2024
2 Year Old Funding for both disadvantaged entitlement and entitlement for working parents	Hourly Rate (£)	Hourly Rate (£)
Local Authority Settlement	8.24	5.67
Centrally Retained Funding	0.41	0
Universal hourly rate for all settings	7.83	5.67

2.5 The under twos' hourly rate entitlement Wolverhampton rate for 2024-2025 will be £11.27. From 2024-2025 the current framework of rules for the distribution of entitlements funded by local authorities for three- and four-year olds has been extended for the two year rates and new under two rates. As a result, up to 5% of the hourly rate can be retained centrally.

2.6 It is proposed the Under Twos' rates of £11.27 is utilised as below:

	2024-2025	2023-2024
Under2's entitlement	Hourly Rate (£)	Hourly Rate (£)
Local Authority Settlement	11.27	N/A
Centrally Retained Funding	0.56	N/A
Universal hourly rate for all settings	10.71	N/A

2.7 Local Authorities are expected to "pass-through" a minimum of 95% of the above hourly rates funding to providers and the proposed formula for 2024-2025 will result in pass through rates of 97% for three- and four-year olds and 95% for both two-year-old entitlements and the under twos' entitlement. The centrally retained element proposed from the three- and four-year old and disadvantaged two-year-old entitlement is estimated to be in the region of £700,000 and this will support the current cost of the existing Early Years team and the increased staffing required to implement the changes to Early years provision in 2024-2025. The 2024-2025 take up of the extended two-year-old and under two funding is unknown at this stage, however all central income will be ringfenced to support costs related to Early years. The pass-through rates will be reviewed annually against costs to ensure all centrally retained funding is used appropriately.

2.8 The table below sets out the proposed hourly rates for Early years funding in 2024-2025:

Proposed Hourly Rates (2024-2025)	Hourly Rate (£)
Base Hourly rate (3 & 4 years olds - Universal and additional entitlement)	5.13
2 Year Old Funding for both disadvantaged entitlement and entitlement for working parents	7.83
Under2's entitlement	10.71
Maintained Nursery supplementary funding	4.64

2.9 As noted above the Deprivation and Inclusion funding is passed to settings in addition to the base rate for three- and four-year-olds.

2.10 The following table sets out the Early years block budgets for 2024-2025 based on the indicative settlement:

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT	2024-2025 allocations (indicative)
EARLY YEARS' BLOCK	£million
Distributed to settings at base rate £5.13 per hour	15.1
Maintained Nursery School Supplement £4.64	1.4
2 year old disadvantaged funding - distributed to settings at £7.83 per hour	4.0
2 year old working parent funding - distributed to settings at £7.83 per hour	3.0
Under 2s - distributed to settings at £10.71 per hour	2.0
Early Years Pupil Premium at £0.68 per hour	0.4
Early Years Pupil Premium for 2 year olds & Under 2's	0.2
Total Distributed to Providers	26.1
RETAINED CENTRALLY FOR DISTRIBUTION BASED ON ELIGIBILITY	
SEN Inclusion Fund supplement at £0.09 per hour	0.3
Deprivation Funding Distribution £0.35 per hour	1.0
Disability Access Fund	0.2
RETAINED FOR CENTRAL SUPPORT SERVICES	
3&4 year olds - £0.17p	0.5
2year olds disadvantaged - £0.41p	0.2
2 year olds working parents & under 2s - £0.41p	0.3
TOTAL EARLY YEARS BLOCK	28.6

3.0 Disability Access Fund

3.1 Disability Access Fund (DAF) is distributed at a rate of £910 per eligible pupil. If a pupil attends more than one setting using their free entitlement, the parent must nominate the main setting to receive the supplement. If a pupil moves from one setting to another after the DAF has been paid, the new setting will not receive the grant for this pupil until the anniversary of the initial payment has been reached. There are no amendments to the distribution of this fund, as it is clearly defined by DfE and DWP eligibility criteria.

4.0 Maintained Nursery School Supplementary Grant

- 4.1 The maintained Nursery School Supplementary grant continues to be available in 2024-2025, as detailed above the hourly rate will be £4.64 (£3.80 in 2023-2024) and the total indicative allocation is £1.4 million. The uplift for 2024-2025 as in 2023-2024 is subject to the EFSA funding floor which for 2024-2025 is £4.34. With the annual increase of 3.3% and the notional rate for the Teachers' Pay and Pension Grant the rate would only be £4.34, the EYNFF funding floor moves this rate up to £4.64.
- 4.2 The maintained nursery supplement is considered as ringfenced by the Council and so any overall underspend at the end of the financial year (once confirmed by the final Early years block allocation in the July following the end of the financial year in March) will be paid to settings in line with grant funding in-year.

5.0 SEN Inclusion Funds

- 5.1 Each Local Authority is required to have SEN Inclusion Funds for all three- and four-year-olds with special educational needs (SEN) who are taking up free entitlements, regardless of the number of hours taken. These funds are intended to support local authorities to work with providers to address the needs of individual children with SEN. This fund also supports local authorities to undertake their responsibilities to strategically commission SEN services as required under the Children and Families Act 2014.
- 5.2 SEN Inclusion funds are targeted at children with lower level or emerging SEN. Children with more complex needs and those in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) continue to be eligible to receive funding via the high needs block of the DSG.