



Subject Heading:

**DSG Contribution to Support
Vulnerable Children in Educational
Settings**

Report Author:

Thelma Bartlett - Consultant

Eligibility to vote:

All members

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the Havering Schools Funding Forum supports the funding of initiatives that will improve the availability to all schools of support for vulnerable children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Schools Funding Forum approves the allocation of £70,000 towards the cost of initiatives in support of Early Help for vulnerable children funded from the balance carried forward from the 2014-15 DSG.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

At the meeting of the Schools Funding Forum held on 24 September 2015 a request was made by the Local Authority for allocation of £70,000 funding from the 2014/15 DSG underspend to support Early Help/Vulnerable Children projects. The Forum requested additional information before making a decision.

2. Proposals for supporting vulnerable children

Professionals' Portal/Gateway

Currently there are some online local authority information systems for families and carers in the format of a directory of services and activities and further information about the local offer for children with special educational needs.

The proposal is to now create an information portal for professionals working with vulnerable families in schools and other educational provision so they are able to access easily early intervention services and commission verified organisations to support vulnerable children and young people. The “Professionals’ Portal/Gateway” will be hosted within Learning and Achievement and it is proposed that the administration of this additional resource for schools will be supported by information from the cluster navigator who will have local information about the current project in one of the clusters (RJ Mitchell Primary is the cluster lead school). It is not proposed to limit the parameters of the sourced information, rather to look at borough, pan-London and wider organisations that can support educational settings.

The creation of this new professionals’ portal will provide more coherent knowledge of support services in one designated area rather than the current arrangements of an information search in a plethora of locations. The feedback from schools indicates that the current arrangements are laborious, confusing and time inefficient. In addition, it is anticipated that there will be considerable cost benefits to educational settings and the possibility of increased collaboration between establishments around the purchase of services.

As part of project management these benefits will be monitored, including feedback from users, with a further report to the Forum in the summer term, 2016

The cost of this proposal is analysed as follows:

Development Officer – Professionals Gateway	£ 38k
System implementation	£ 8K
Total	£46k

The role of the Development Officer will include:

- Lead on the implementation of a comprehensive on-line professionals’ gateway of early intervention services; identify, audit and build on existing sources of information to develop the on-line resource.
- Take responsibility for the design, creation and managing of provider content pages and profiles and managing user accounts
- Lead on the consultation with both users and providers to ensure the effectiveness of the resource for multi- agency working.
- Lead on the implementation of systems to monitor user interaction in order to ensure that the gateway can be used as an effective preventative tool.
- Lead on the development of the early intervention offer through the creation of multi-agency teams in geographical locations across the Borough to ensure that children and families are supported at the earliest opportunity by sharing information and acting in collaboration.

The recruitment of this officer will be by way of a competitive process, with preference given to existing staff that are at risk of redundancy. Assuming that a suitable candidate can be found from with “at risk” staff, it is anticipated that an appointment can be made during November 2015. If there is no such suitable candidate this appointment may be delayed.

The Development Officer – Professionals Gateway will liaise with schools and other settings to ensure that proposals meet their needs and will then procure the system and software in accordance with the Local Authority’s Finance Framework. It is anticipated that the system will be procured and installed by April 2016.

The services which are advertised on the portal/gateway will be vetted so that robust systems are in place to ensure a simpler mechanism of sourcing timely and appropriate early intervention support.

Management of Learning and Achievement Projects

The overall management and co-ordination of the two Learning and Achievement projects (one year only) in support of vulnerable children is costed at £22,000. The two projects which are currently within the local authority’s demand management strategy relate to the 2 year old + offer which is supporting vulnerable children and their families who do not meet the statutory guidelines for a funded place and who will benefit from this intervention in order to prevent further costs to statutory services later on in their educational journey.

The second project relates to the cluster navigator post. This post holder began work at the start of the autumn term for one year only with a cluster of primary schools, two secondary schools and there is a proposal to include the early years’ settings in the area. The purpose of this project is to signpost educational settings to a range of statutory, community, voluntary and faith organisation who can offer additional capacity to schools and create resilience within the settings to meet the current challenge of the changing demography of the local authority.

This management is being carried out by a consultant, who works in Havering one day per week at a cost of £500 per day and provides additional support for the project workers during the week. This dedicated resource has been appointed to ensure the projects are completed to timescale and to monitor their progress and outcomes alongside support for the implementation of the educational professionals’ portal/gateway

Support to the pastoral deputies meetings

In the Spring Term 2015 a forum for the pastoral deputies in the secondary sector was initiated; although it is largely managed by the schools, there is a small amount of strategic and administrative support from the Education Inclusions team.

Cost £2,000