

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 FEBRUARY 2021

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(1) Questions from David Webb to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning

- (a) Funding 20/21 allocations for both the disability access fund (DAF) expecting 94 Southend children to be eligible at a fund rate of £615 per child with a total fund £57,910 and a £127,486 early years pupil fund expected to target 422 children on PTE, funded at 0.53 pence per hour. How did they formulate the funding for the total fund and each child given £615 pounds and what does this cover?**

Thank you for your question Mr. Webb. The £615 per child rate for the Disability Access Fund (DAF) and the £0.53 per hour rate allocation for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) does come direct and set from central government, the local authority therefore has no control over these rates. The Government will very likely assess the rates themselves based on a formulae.

In terms of a child eligible to receive DAF, this is for a 3-or 4-year-old child, that is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, and are in receipt of universal 3- & 4-year-old childcare offer. Early years providers are responsible for identifying eligible children, and local authorities are then responsible for checking the criteria is met. If approved the early years provider will then use the one payment to make reasonable adjustments to their provision to support the child to access early years provision.

The providers are fully supported by the Council's Early Years SEND and Development Teams on ensuring the use of the funding is appropriate for the child. The providers are required to keep a record of resources and equipment that the funding has allowed their setting to provide. This one-off payment can then benefit future children who may have additional requirements.

In terms of children eligible to receive EYPP, it will be based on if their family are eligible for the following benefits: Income support, income-based Job seekers allowance, income related employment and support allowance, Universal Credit etc., or if the child is a Looked After Child by a local authority, or a child that has left care through an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order. EYPP is payable on top of a the 3-& 4-year-old universal offer. Early years providers are ultimately responsible for identifying eligible children, and local authorities are then responsible for checking the criteria is met. If approved the early years provider will then use the funding to support children's learning, development, and schools readiness.

This will be informed by the providers understanding with the parents the child's needs and preferences. The money could help eligible children to benefit from extra resources, equipment, staff training and extra staff hours to implement specific strategies and extra activities such as trips.

All providers are required to keep evidence of spend and the difference this has made to children's outcomes, this is shared with parents and is requested by Ofsted as part of the inspection.

- (b) Since last year March 2020 - January 2021 children have lost a lot of time from education at schools. They have had to be educated at home. This year the pupils teacher will assess their grades by teacher assessment. How has Southend council worked with schools, parents to provide resources and other areas to assist parents to teach their children at home?**

Thank you for your question Mr Webb. For clarity, not all pupils have been educated at home, the children of key workers and those deemed as vulnerable (subject to social care, in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan, or those who do not have internet access at home) are eligible to access education on a school site, subject to capacity, should they wish to take it up.

In order to support parents who are supporting their children with remote learning, the Government has made provision for a number of IT digital devices that schools can draw down for their pupils, including connectivity. Schools are becoming increasingly used to offering remote learning, in a variety of forms. For many, live lessons or recorded lessons take place throughout the week, for others, daily “assemblies” set the scene for the work of that day. In addition, national websites such as ARC Learning or the BBC provide comprehensive lesson planning. However, it should be remembered that for a number of valid reasons, some parents prefer or require a more flexible daily regime, which may request paper-based learning on the same topic. Significant credit must be given to both the parents in this task, but also for the teachers and support staff who facilitate this very high level and quality of provision. It should also be noted that as numbers attending increase, the ability for schools to continue with on-site and off-site learning may be compromised.

As a council, officers are undertaking weekly webinar meetings with all headteachers alongside Public Health to support their task. In addition, we monitor the contact that schools undertake with pupils learning remotely. Lastly, through schemes such as that run by our Educational Psychology Service, we run twice-daily drop-in sessions for parents who may be finding home education challenging.