

# **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council**

**Report of Deputy Chief Executive - People  
and Director of Education and Early Years**

**To  
Education Board**

**On  
18<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Report prepared by:  
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**Southend 2050 - Opportunity and Prosperity:  
Our children are school and life ready, and the workforce is highly skilled.**

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## **1. Purpose of Report**

**1.1 To propose to the Education Board the use of funding resources available through the Early Years DSG reserve.**

## **2. Recommendations**

**Education Board are asked to agree:**

**2.1 Using the one-off funding resource of £334k over a period of two years, 2022/23 and 2023/24.**

**2.2 Use of the funds to support Early Years delivery in:**

- Maintaining the development officers outreach activities to reach parents/ carers of eligible children who are not accessing their entitlement.**
- To ensure marketing and communication are fully developed using all platforms developed with the Communication Team.**
- To provide a dedicated fund so that vulnerable 2-year-olds can access an early years place**
- To pilot expanding the inclusion fund to include 2-year-olds with the aim of supporting early intervention**
- To support Early Years resource within the Operational, Performance and Intelligence team. (OPI)**
- To deliver specific Level three training on supporting children with SEND. In line with Southend 2050 outcomes, involve childcare providers active participation in design and roll out of training programmes.**

**2.3 And update the Education Board over the course of the 2 years, as to the effectiveness of these funds.**

### 3. Background/Context

3.1 The DSG early years balance is in a very favourable and healthy financial position. After retaining the recommended minimum £500k reserves to support any fluctuations in EY DSG funding, there is still an available £448k reserve balance. This proposal is for a one-off spend of £334k over the next two years to support maximum uptake of all early years funding. The welcome increase in base rates to providers along with the increase in Early Years Pupil Premium – covered elsewhere in the papers - enables a large proportion of the outstanding reserves to be utilised in ways that will best support outcomes for families and childcare providers in Southend.

All areas of this one-off funding will be reviewed annually to ensure that the best use is being made of the available funds. The uplift in provider funding rates for the next three years as announced in the latest spending review, will allow for consideration of mainstreaming some of the initiatives in this one-off spend.

#### Funding request

3.2 In 2019 Early years identified the lack of resource to support outreach to parents/carers to inform them of their entitlement, to fully maximise the targeted two-year-old funding for our most deprived children and ensure that all children are accessing universal three- and four-year-old entitlement. Parents/carers are able to work through maximising extended entitlement and tax-free childcare.

EY DSG reserve funding was used to resource the outreach team for two years up to 31 March 2022. The outreach team have been extremely successful and early years are keen to extend and maintain this role for the next two years. We know that there is far more to be done to engage eligible parents/carers across Southend.

3.3 To use available reserves to develop marketing materials/resources to publicise the entitlements to parents/carers and to maximise the opportunity for parents/carers to understand their entitlements and how to access them.

3.4 The criteria for 2-year-old entitlement have not changed for some years. The consequences are that some of our most vulnerable families are marginally over the funding threshold or have family issues not covered by the criteria for two-year-old funding entitlement. These children are in danger of slipping through the net and many would benefit from a childcare place. The proposed fund would allow 15 children and families identified by appropriate agencies to be able to access up to 15 hours per week childcare.

3.5 Providers have reported 2-year-olds attending since the Covid outbreak have far greater individual needs especially communication and language and PSED including self-regulation. These children were born just before or during lockdown and experienced the greatest impact of isolation and lack of social interaction. In addition, many children with complex SEND and/or medical needs are too young at 2 years old to have been awarded Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place. Expanding the inclusion fund to provide support for two-year-olds before formal assessment takes place would allow for intervention to take place earlier in the child's life.

3.6 The dedicated resource from the OPI over the last two years has supported the development towards a self-sustaining management information report system. However,

due to Covid, the priority has been to be fully reactive to meet the needs of families, sustain childcare providers, and meet Government temporary requirements – such as daily attendance information. Therefore we propose to continue this resource for the next two years to ensure that all reports and systems are in place.

3.7 Early years would like to continue the successful implementation of the Level 3 qualification for SENCO’s to further develop a full training programme to ensure the highest quality provision for funded children. Covid has caused a huge financial strain on childcare providers, and this is continuing due to the loss of private income from wrap around care as people continue to work from home. Private income has long subsidised funded places. This means providers are not in a place to fund training.

3.8 Proposed estimated use of the available funds for the two year period:

<b>Outreach team</b>	£85,000
<b>Marketing and Communication</b>	£5,000
<b>2-year-old childcare places</b>	£92,000
<b>Expanding inclusion fund</b>	£50,000
<b>OPI resource for development</b>	£92,000
<b>Training programme</b>	£10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£334,000</b>

**4. Summary of benefits of the proposal**

**4.1 Poverty Agenda**

The funding proposal will enable the council to:

- Maximise the available budget for Early Years DSG
- Ensure children and families are fully aware of all entitlements. Targeting those children and families living in the most vulnerable households
- Meet the statutory duties to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents.

**5. Implications of the report**

5.1 If the proposal is approved as detailed in 3.8 this will enable the staff members to continue in their roles, proposed additional publicity activities to go ahead, and provide additional support for our most vulnerable families and those most affected by the impact of Covid. It will also provide an opportunity for the childcare workforce to upskill and ensure that fully inclusive practice is embedded within our settings.