

Pathfinder for the New Flexible Entitlement for 3 & 4 Year Olds Nursery Education 2006 - 2008

Summary

1. This report:
 - informs members of the Pathfinder award of new flexible entitlement for 3 & 4 year olds increasing from 12.5 hours to 15 hours of nursery education provision for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008
 - requests approval to extend posts within the service
 - seeks agreement on the membership of the Pathfinder Project Board and the creation of a Headteacher Reference Group

Background

2. This report is a follow up to the report brought to EMAP on Nursery Education Funding for Three & Four Year Olds in March this year. The Action Plan for the Ten Year Strategy '*Choice for Parents, the best start for children: Making it happen*' sets out plans for implementing the government's commitment to increase the length and flexibility of the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds to early education and care. The entitlement will increase from 12.5 to 15 hours per week (over 38 weeks) by 2010.
3. The local authority has been granted the Pathfinder award to:
 - begin delivery of 15 hours of free and more flexible early learning and care for all 3 & 4 year olds from April 2007
 - deliver provision across the hours of 8 am to 6 pm
4. An allocation of £9,403 for the planning phase will contribute towards the project management costs of the project. This will be made available through the GSSG (General Sure Start Grant) in two equal payments in November 2006 and February 2007. A further £50k for the purpose of administration and other costs has been confirmed. This will be released on a quarterly basis through the GSSG and will be monitored in order to ensure that objectives are met and that learning about the activity is gathered.

5. The total allocation of £551,626k over 2006 - 08 for the provision phase will be finalised this December on the basis of the information provided during the planning phase of the project.
6. Pathfinders will be supported by the DfES and by each other. Collaborative working, sharing and learning between pathfinders and other LAs is invaluable to development. There is also an open website, electronic newsletter and numerous conferences and events that will be in place to support pathfinders.
7. Pathfinders will ultimately build on the success of high take up (approx 96% of three year olds and virtually all four year olds are now benefiting from at least some free provision). This is an opportunity to increase the length and flexibility of the entitlement in order to deliver more learning and development opportunities for young children and better meet the needs of families.

Operation

8. The aims and objectives of the Pathfinder Project are to:
 - Begin delivery of 15 hours of free and more flexible early learning and care for all three and four year olds from April 2007 in accordance with agreed plans
 - Deliver provision either across the hours of 8-4 or 8-6
 - Inform the development of the national roll out of the flexible free entitlement by acting as beacons of good practice for other local authorities
 - The Local Authority will be expected to participate in a national evaluation and where appropriate, facilitate access to selected settings as part of the evaluation process
9. It is proposed that the remit, purpose and membership of the existing NEF multi-agency group be widened to become a Pathfinder Project Board to facilitate the Pathfinder. This board would fit into the existing reporting structure (YorOK board chaired by Cllr Kind, EYESP chaired by Peggy Sleight, EYESP Places sub group chaired by multi-agency revolving chair, pathfinder project board chaired by Head of Early years and Extended Schools Service).
10. Membership includes representation from:
 - Special Educational Needs
 - Looked After Children
 - Nursery Education Funding Working Group
 - Early Years and Extended Schools Service
 - Pre School Learning Alliance
 - Vale of York Community Accounting Service
 - National Childminding Association
 - Travellers Education
 - Education Advisors
 - Catherine Leonard
 - Primary Headteachers
 - Parents

- Private Providers
- DfES

11. In addition it is proposed that a new reference group be established made up of five headteachers from Primary Schools with education nursery provision. This group would also include Human Resources, Early Years and Finance staff from the local authority. Initially this would be chaired by the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services. The remit of the group would be to work on finding a new formula for schools funding for early years.

Key Challenges

12. The challenge we now face is of strengthening further the relationship between the PVI and maintained sector. In particular we need to:
- ensure that provision in all sectors is of high quality - diversity of provision should not mean a diversity of quality. All settings will receive the level of support, resources and training that is needed to guarantee high standard across the city
 - strengthen relationships between the PVI and maintained sector. In particular to ensure that all sectors view themselves as equal parts of the same team, rather than as separate entities working in partnership

Key Milestones and Activities

13. The key milestones and activities are set out at Annex 1. As a next step each Pathfinder authority has been asked to submit a Project Plan which is to be used as a practical tool to help set, review and deliver against key milestones and engage stakeholders. The Pathfinder covers two main stages - planning and provision, with some interim evaluation before delivery starts.

Two Year Olds

14. The local authority has also been asked to submit an expression of interest on delivering free early years provision to disadvantaged two year olds, and the DfES has now confirmed City of York's participation in the project from January 2007. The DfES has yet to release detail on the available funding but has recognised that the two initiatives should run together given the synergies between them. Two year olds will be the subject of a separate report.

Consultation

15. Consultation is a major facet of the pathfinder bid. We propose to consult widely as part of the planning phase to explore options for flexibly ways of rolling out the new entitlement.

Options

16. If we are to participate in this pathfinder initiative we need to create new temporary part-time posts:
- management for the Pathfinder project (2 days per week)
 - administrative support and data collection / analysis (3 days per week)

- a development worker to assist schools and other settings to work in the new flexible way (3 days per week)

The manager post can be funded from 1 October 06 to 31 March 08, whilst funding will be available for the administrative and development work posts in 07/08. The case for any extension of the posts will be reviewed at the end of the pathfinder.

Analysis

17. Building on and utilising existing expertise and skills will add value to the aims of the Pathfinder. Key relationships with stakeholders and agencies will be further developed to maximise the effect of the pathfinder.

Corporate Priorities

18. The pathfinder will be rolled out through The Shared Foundation Partnership model which has been successful in working to develop relationships between schools and the PVI sector in order to offer choice, diversity and support in improving outcomes for children across the city as a whole. This strategy has also been used for the development of Extended Schools and Children's Centres.

Implications

Financial Implications

19. The funding for provision is provisionally £551,626k over two years. Funding is required for staffing, outreach, planning and co-ordination, marketing and communication. The DfES has provided £9k for the 06/07 planning phase together with £50k to facilitate administration and other costs associated with delivery in 2007/08.
20. The cost of the proposed structure is shown in the table below based on estimated gradings:

Cost of proposed structure:	Oct - Mar 07	07/08
	£	£
Pathfinder Manager 15 hrs - From 1.10.06	7,436	14,872
Pathfinder Development Worker 22.5 hrs - From 1.4.07	0	15,040
Pathfinder Administrator & Data Analyst 22.5 hrs from 1.4.07	0	11,098
Operational Expenses	1,967	8,990
Total	9,403	50,000

Funded by:

General Sure Start General - 3/4yr old pathfinder ring fence block	9,403	50,000
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22. The DfES is also considering giving local authorities a 20% uplift on nursery education funding to achieve flexibility on the extended entitlement and it will cover both the maintained and non-maintained sectors. This will be the

subject of a separate report to members once the final uplift figure has been determined by the DfES.

Human Resource Implications

23. In the event the proposal is supported, HR will undertake a benchmarking exercise for the new posts to support their establishment at an appropriate grade, pending job evaluation. The outcome of this will be noted in the Directorate decision log.

Equalities Implications

24. All families (an estimate of 3,600 3 & 4 year olds) are able to access flexible provision 52 weeks of the year. All providers (maintained and PVI) are able to provide this provision.

Legal Implications

25. The extension of the free entitlement must be seen in the context of the Childcare Bill. The Bill reinforces role and statute responsibility of the local authority in improving outcomes for children and as a market facilitator of the childcare and early learning sector.

Crime and disorder

26. Research has shown that investment in Early years enhances children's development and that disadvantaged children in particular can benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experience.

IT

27. A feasibility study of the current Nursery Education Funding IT system will be undertaken in order to assess capabilities in line with the changes to flexibility and sessions.

Property

28. Extended Schools capital funding will be aimed at enhancement to existing buildings which have the greatest impact first for the extended entitlement to 15 hours per week. Any capital work can also be about increasing sustainability and improving quality.

Other

29. Early Years has a statutory need to ensure that we are in a position to rise to the challenge of co-ordinating and integrating services, particularly in Children Centre areas.

Risk Management

30. Risk has been assessed at Low Risk (1-3). The Pathfinder will build on established expertise within the service and enhance relationships across the new Children's Service Directorate.

Recommendations

31. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member:

To approve the creation of three additional posts.

Reason: To co-ordinate and manage the Pathfinder to ensure maximum efficiency.

To approve the membership of the Pathfinder Project Board.

Reason: To ensure that membership is reflective of the aims of the Pathfinder. It is vital all key stakeholders/agencies are involved.

To approve the creation of the Headteacher Reference Group.

Reason: To examine formula funding to ensure equity across all settings.

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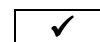
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Wards Affected: All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

1. Key Milestones and Targets for Pathfinder
2. Job descriptions